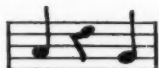


**The American
RECORD
GUIDE**



April, 1955
Volume 21, No. 8



THE LOUISVILLE
ORCHESTRA'S
RECORDING PROJECT

MAHLER'S
"EIGHTH SYMPHONY"



THIRTY-FIVE CENTS

A Famous Czech Symphony

SUK: *Symphony in C minor, Op. 27* (Asrael); Czech Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Václav Talich. Czech Supraphone 10" discs 85, 86, 87, \$4.75 each.

▲JOSEF SUK (1874-1935), who married Dvorak's daughter Otilia, owed much to his father-in-law with whom he studied. His early music was influenced by Schubert, Brahms and Dvorak, but in his later works his polyphonic development exceeded his teacher's. The subjective character of his music inclined him toward program music—"not to a realistic, concrete program, but to a suggestive, psychological one." In later years, he leaned towards atonality. In this country we know little of Suk's music beyond his ingratiating *Serenade for Strings* (Capitol) and his *Fantasia for Violin and Orchestra* (Westminster). Both works command musical respect, but his *Symphony in C minor* gives us an insight into his true artistic stature. It was begun in 1906 as a memorial to Dvorak, but before it was completed his wife died and when he returned to his symphony he wrote the last two movements for her. After the deaths of his beloved ones, we are told that Suk "could find no consolation, either in nature or the company of his friends. Only intensive work provided some measure of relief." Having sketched the first three movements of his symphony during the year following Dvorak's death, he later added two others inscribed "To Otilia." One Czech writer says while Suk's "previous work resembles a charming musical notebook of tranquil life enjoyment, the 'Asrael' symphony represents the first voluminous chapter of the serious autobiography of a man despairing in search of inner peace. He suffers defeat, feels sick and tired of the struggle, yet, at the end, he remains the victor." One thinks of Tchaikovsky's "Pathétique" or Locatelli's *Elegiac Symphony* (written to the memory of his

departed wife) as parallels in symphonic literature. Both employ a suggestive, psychological programmatic approach. In Suk's work, as in the Locatelli, there is no morbidity or self-pity, rather a submerging sorrow from which he arises. In music he found the true assuagement of a personal grief, giving it a universal import that resolved him to a new life. Two motives, representing Fate and the Angel of Death, dominate his opening movement, which is based on the sonata pattern that expands traditional dimensions. These themes play a prominent part in four of the five movements. The second movement is called "The Song of Fear"—the fear of approaching death, and the third—a *Scherzo*—is the "Dance of Death." The fourth movement, *Adagio*, is a lament for his wife. The finale, re-echoing the themes of Fate and Death, is the spiritual triumph over submerging grief. At its climactic height, the motives of Fate and Death "break into splinters to be heard only as distant echoes of past horrors in the insuing finale." The struggle for peace has been won. This work moved me greatly. Though its programmatic connotations suggested thoughts of Mahler, Suk's music is less disjointed and better unified than any similar psychological program of Mahler. This symphony deserves more universal recognition than it has received.

The performance is a fine one, suggesting a complete absorption with and understanding of the music on the part of the conductor. The recording does not quite measure up to our standards, but it is realistic in character. Its division on five sides of three 10" discs, not too generously filled, makes for needless expenditure. The sixth side contains an overture to an opera, *The Fall of Arkun*, by Fibich, which seems somewhat disjointed after Suk's symphony and suggestive of a programmatic pre-view of the drama. —P.H.R.

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The American RECORD GUIDE

formerly
The American Music Lover

Volume 21, No. 8
April, 1955

Cover Picture: Pierre Monteux who celebrated his 80th birthday on April 4.

THE AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE, published at Pelham, N. Y. Editorial Office: 115 Reed Ave., Business Office: Room 16, Post Office Bldg.

●Peter Hugh Reed, Editor & Publisher. James Lyons, Associate Editor. Robert H. Reid, Phil Hart, C. J. Luten, Phillip L. Miller, James Norwood, Anson W. Peckham, Max de Schauensee, Harold C. Schonberg, Contributors. Paul Girard, Advertising & Circulation.

●The American Record Guide, published on the tenth of the dated month, sells at 35c a copy. Annual subscription in the U.S.A. and Canada is \$3.50. In all foreign countries, \$4.00.

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●Re-entered as 2nd class matter July 1, 1953 at the Post Office at New Rochelle, N. Y. under the act of March 3, 1879. Additional re-entry at Post Office, Easton, Pa., June 1950. (Contents copyright 1955 by Peter Hugh Reed.)

April, 1955

"The Confederacy" Again

Editorial Notes

NINETY years ago April 9th, in the home of Wilmer McLean at Appomattox, Virginia, General Robert E. Lee and Lieutenant-General Ulysses S. Grant signed the terms of surrender that ended the Confederacy and brought the Civil War—or the War Between the States as the South called it—to a close. Then followed the conflict of peace in which for too long a time that "endless extinction of unhappy hates" failed to restore peace and "public calm." In the hearts of countless Southerners, a submerged fire burned for their lost cause which, some say, has never been fully extinguished.

Columbia's recent album, *The Confederacy* (which the writer reviewed in our January issue), has stirred conflicting feelings among some people; and the motivation for its release have been misconstrued by others, judging from correspondence to your editor. Aside from the profit motive, Vice-President Goddard Lieberman sought only, in recording *The Confederacy*, to enliven public interest in the rich history of our country. Any allegations to the contrary are obliterated by the fact that a sequel is planned on the *Union*, which might very well lead to a further series of human-interest cantatas based on other important points in the history of this country. Those who think that Mr. Lieberman was predisposed to favor of the Southern cause are herewith informed that he was born in England, though now a citizen of our country, and therefore he could be wholly objective about any post-Colonial period of American history.

Some correspondents have expressed displeasure for the recorded echoes and memories of the Confederacy, while others applaud the "vision" of the Columbia enterprise. Of interest is the fact that few were of Southern ancestry. Some criticize the work as artistically of little worth. To be sure, sentiment and patriotism prevail in it, but this was to be expected. The Confederacy was born of dissent that

inevitably led into war. Human interest is its legacy. Therefore, it is a mistake to condemn the artistic worth of this enterprise and to label it a "Southern tribute that makes no bones about glorifying the good old days when humans could be bought and sold down or up the river like hoppers of coal or fertilizer." This is the viewpoint of one irate California correspondent, who further says: "I read with more than casual interest your touching review in the January issue of *The Confederacy*, a commentary written by one brave enough to sign his initials... May I say that I think it shameful for Columbia to waste talent and money on such musical trash as comprises *The Confederacy*, and even more shameful for the *Record Guide* to praise that which at best can only interest a historian devoted to but a limited aspect of our lamentable rebellion to perpetuate human slavery in our United States. Nor am I the only holder of these opinions. A local radio station, which broadcast this work, acknowledged that it had been flooded with protests at broadcasting a work of such obvious lack of musical values."

An Isolated Case

The experience of the California radio station seems to be an isolated one, and one suspects that the announcer failed to create a receptive state of mind in his unseen audience in a proper introductory preamble. If he had, surely those disfavoring the subject, or finding its artistic substance not to their liking, would have turned off their radios or tuned in another station and had no incentive to register a protest.

In devising a work of this kind, musical values are not of prime interest; rather, the use of music that stimulated and appealed to the people at large of those times. Sentimentality has been the keynote in such matters in the South for a long time. Anyone delving into the music of the South prior to the Civil War might well concur with the assertion of P. T. Barnum, who said that the South was not really awakened to the values of "classical" music until Jenny Lind was heard in recital there under his aegis. If and when

Mr. Bales, who devised the cantata called *The Confederacy*, were to assemble another work of similar nature on The Union, one doubts that musical values—if representative of popular appeal—will be of any greater worth. One wonders what the California critics would say if Columbia were to devise a historical sequence devoted to the music of the 49-ers, or to the music of the early California mission settlements.

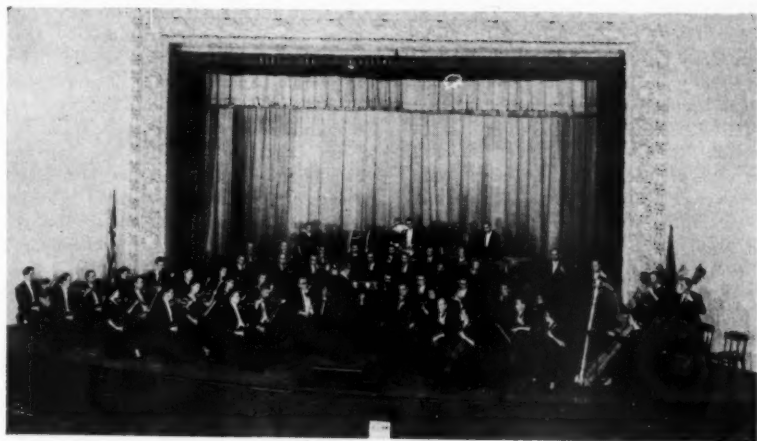
Someone once said that sentiment "has a kind of divine alchemy." And the unashamed sentimentality of regional patriotism has its alchemy, too. What is trash but something undesirable that is thrown away? That which is commonplace and trivial often assumes importance and later is treasured in the hearts of many because of associations.

The accusation that Columbia's dramatization of the Confederacy can only interest a historian "devoted to but a limited aspect of our lamentable rebellion" shoots so far wide of the mark that it is difficult to believe that the writer was not allowing his temper to overrule rationalization. The work is not confined to *historical* interest since a great deal of *human* interest is involved. Since this writer's families were divided by the war, he heard in his childhood many of the old songs of the South sung in *The Confederacy* as well as similar old songs of the North. Even at the dawn of the present century, many of these old songs were still being sung in Southern homes and could be found on a piano's music-rack along with music of Chopin, Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Rubinstein. If one ever has looked over a pile of old music which belonged to one's grandparents, one has more than likely discovered a conglomeration of musical values. For every generation collects "popular" music that appealed to the people at large as well as time-honored "classical" music that someone, more gifted in the family, was able to perform.

It is of interest to read in CBS's Annual Report to Stockholders for 1954 that "*The Confederacy*, priced at \$10.00, was Columbia Masterworks' best-selling set of 1954, acclaimed throughout the country."

(Continued on page 259)

The American Record Guide



THE BLUE GRASS WAS GREENER

The Louisville Orchestra's Recording Project

by James Lyons

EVER SINCE the Rockefeller Foundation announced its \$400,000 grant to The Louisville Orchestra for "a project to stimulate, encourage and foster the creation, performance and recording of new musical works by living composers," this journal has looked forward eagerly to studying the phonographic aspects of the enterprise. It is too early to appraise its broad effects, if any, on the merchandising mores of the industry. But the recordings themselves, at least, have started to come in, and it seems reasonable at this point—just two years after the master plan was disclosed—to remark on the repertory, the mechanics of its genesis, and the merits of its presentation.

To put first things first, the dozen 12-inch LPs in the initial series are available by subscription only. Two albums are provided, each with six sleeves. The price for the lot is \$65, or \$5.95 down plus \$5.95 a month if one cares to spread the pay-
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ments. Inquiries or actual orders should be directed to the Manager of The Louisville Orchestra, R. H. Wangerin, at 830 South Fourth Street, Louisville 3, Kentucky.

The contents of the discs are as follows: I—*Invocation & Dance* (Creston), *Overture*, "*Dawn in a Tropical Forest*" (Villa-Lobos), and *Triskelion* (Stevens); II—*Symphony No. 11* (Cowell), *Suite, Op. 87* (Tcherepnin), and *A Concert Overture* (Wagenaar); III—*Symphony No. 6* (Mennin), *Variations for Piano and Orchestra* (Riegger), and *Notturmo* (Toch); IV—*Concerto No. 7 for Orchestra* (Hovhanness), *Overture to "Much Ado About Nothing"* (Castelnuovo-Tedesco), and *Sinfonietta Flamenca* (Surinach). These recordings have been received and will be discussed below.

In prospect for the remainder of the year are: V—*Louisville Concerto* (Ibert), *Toccata Giocoso* (Read), and *Rhapsodic Variations for Tape Recorder and Orchestra*

(Luening-Ussachevsky); VI—*The Transposed Heads* (Glanville-Hicks); VII—*Symphony for Strings* (Persichetti), *Little Symphony No. 2 in B Flat* (Sanders), and *Studie im Pianissimo, Op. 45* (Blacher); VIII—*Variazioni per Orchestra* (Dallapiccola), *Cumbres* (Moncayo), *Serenade for Orchestra* (Kay), and *Ouverture Méditerranéenne* (Milhaud); IX—*Meditations* (Von Einem), *Prelude for Orchestra, Op. 71* (Rathaus), and *Rhapsody for Orchestra* (Perle); X—*Pampeana No. 3—A Pastoral Symphony* (Ginastera), *A Carol on Twelfth Night* (Bergsma), *Les Trois Lys* (Sauguet), and *Euphony for Orchestra* (Ward); XI—*Fantasie di Ogni Giorno* (Malipiero), *Introduzione e Gioco Delle Ore* (Rieti), and *The Enchanted Island* (Bacon); and XII—*Double Trouble* (Mohaupt). VI and XII are operas, recorded in their entirety.

When you consider that none of these three dozen works was more than a gleam in its creator's unconscious no farther back than, say, the last Presidential campaign, the enormity of the Rockefeller munificence is simply breathtaking—Eszterházy was a piker by comparison. But why did the Foundation settle so huge a sum on a provincial organization that could not, at its best, aspire to the performance standards of the sophisticated northeast?

The Man Behind the Project

Simply stated, the reason was that none of the more likely candidates had shown any comparable cordiality to the *avant-garde*. As early as 1948, then-Mayor Charles P. Farnsley of Louisville had sold the elders of the Philharmonic Society, which controls the Orchestra, on a uniquely far-sighted policy of commissioning a brand new piece for each of the regular subscription concerts. Conductor Robert Whitney, with a decade of solid local success already behind him, had lent all of his considerable prestige to the idea and proceeded at once to implement it.

There was a modicum of grumbling, we can be sure, but the sticktoitiveness of Farnsley, Whitney and their co-conspirators enabled them to keep faith with the future. One after another, most of the distinguished men of music came to Louisville to hear their handiwork, and slowly

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the word got around that Kentucky's blue grass was indeed greener, musically, than the northern variety—that it was higher in protein value by virtue of greenbacks, to put it bluntly, and hence the better for undernourished composers to feed on.

By December of 1950, the plan had become so well ensconced that the management, presumably in delighted collusion with the Chamber of Commerce, shot the works and flew the 50-piece Orchestra and its conductor to New York for a gala Carnegie Hall concert of music that had been ordered by, and first performed in, a city formerly less famous for its culture than for its profitable affinity to bourbon whiskey and horseflesh. The jaded Manhattan critics could not conceal their pleasure in "discovering" this unsuspected talent from the far hills, nor were the most crassly commercial record companies unimpressed. Mercury moved in right away and contracted for a performance of Schuman's *Judith*. Other firms came forward with variously attractive proposals. By season's end, Columbia had signed the Orchestra exclusively, and soon the accumulating backlog of commissions was being represented on the LP lists—substantial items like Dello Joio's *The Triumph of St. Joan*, Milhaud's *Kentuckiana*, Martinu's *Intermezzo*, the Foss *Parable of Death*, and so forth.

So that the Rockefeller Foundation was not buying any pig in a poke for its \$400,000.

Innumerable news stories and feature articles have been devoted to this singular experiment in artistic philanthropy, but perhaps it would not be untoward at this juncture to submit a brief audit of the past and projected disbursements over the four-year period covered by the grant.

120 Works in All

IN ALL 112 symphonic works and eight one-hour operas, respectively 28 and two annually, will have been commissioned at the rate of \$1,200 each except for the operas, which fetch \$4,000 including the libretto and copying charges. All rights are reserved for the composer, and he or she also receives the customary record

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Left to right:
of Louisville
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April, 1951

royalties. A Louisville committee, under the chairmanship of Farnsley, is charged with conferring the commissions. Composers of all countries are eligible.

OVER and above this, ten student composers annually will have received awards of \$500 for orchestral compositions. These young men or women also may be of any nationality. Selections are made by a revolving committee of senior composers.

EACH commissioned work and each student product will have been performed four times in one or another of the annual series of 46 weekly concerts.

THE commissioned works are recorded, and 12 LP discs will have been made available annually by private subscription. The student pieces are not included in the recording program, but every last one of them will have been taped and a copy presented to the composers for their own use.

Altogether, assuming that the \$400,000 was earmarked for creative music to start with, it is difficult to conceive of a more sensible way to dispose of it. Percentage-wise the purchasing agents are bound to

give a break to virtually every supplier in the business. The initial series of recordings—a fourth of the total—represents 35 composers. Allowing for a high incidence of repeaters, even, about a hundred will have been given a chance before the game is done. On the face of it, every sizable talent in the world of music can expect a fair shake. If you doubt this for any reason, I challenge you to name all of the living composers who, in your estimation, are entitled to a modest subsidy on the basis of past performance. I daresay your list will be shorter, doubtless far shorter, than the veritable *Who's Who* singled out for the Louisville largesse.

The heart of the matter, as I see it, is that circulation is the goal. This attitude implies a certain cowardice, a certain lack of discrimination. Better this, perhaps, than subjective prejudice masquerading as criticism. I am frank to say, the minimum requisite credentials being on file for all participants, that time alone will isolate the masterpieces in this enormous load of grist for the critical mill. If I may borrow a smidgen of wisdom from Peggy Glanville-Hicks, one of the most gifted



Left to right: B. Hudson Milner, Ex-Mayor Charles P. Farnsley, Mrs. Dann C. Byck (Pres. of Louisville Philharmonic Society), and Robert Whitney (conductor) discussing the news that the Rockefeller Foundation has given the society a \$400,000 Grant.

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of the Louisville composers, "American [music] is still at the beginning of the great curve of history; and as in earlier epochs of all things the fate is in the hands of the many rather than of the few. [In such a situation] much that is presented must of necessity fall back into obscurity and oblivion. But it is from just thus humus that later the 'big trees' come." If I read that correctly, it is a plea for the right of every composer to be heard. It is good to be able to say that we are closer to that millennial realization than ever before, as I have had occasion to observe elsewhere. I repeat it in this context because the Louisville recording project is a seven-league step towards the ultimate goal—getting new music performed in a concert hall is a hard enough job, but getting any representative quantity of it before the larger public proved too Herculean a task for all its partisans in congress assembled before the Rockefeller Foundation came along.

Accordingly, one is inclined to temporize with respect to the round dozen works that make up the first four discs at hand. Also, there is not enough space left in which to deal adequately with them. But to sum up the highlights briefly: *Triskelion* is patterned after the ancient motif of the same name that shows three branches radiating from a common center. The title bears no antiquarian significance beyond its workability in this case, but Stevens has amply justified his poetic license by contriving an exceedingly close-knit and fascinating structure out of slender materials. Cowell's symphony, sub-titled "Seven Rituals of Music," is a characteristically succinct and compelling essay in musical theosophy; the sections in turn connote birth, work, love, play, magic, war and death. The Riegger piece is a finely tooled 12-tone product (coincidentally with the same number of variations) that offers welcome new phonographic evidence of his claim to posterity's affection—and to a lot more attention here and now, I might add. His idiom is not the most congenial, but no composer I know of speaks more eloquently in the contemporary rhetoric, and I for one find his every effort rewarding in the extreme.

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The Mennin *Sixth* is put together with incredible skill, and surely it is the most impressive of its series altogether, but I continue to feel that this gifted symphonist has yet to find himself. When I heard the *Sixth* in Carnegie Hall this past season I was thunderstruck by its allusions to Vaughan Williams, and in particular by its redolence of the *F Minor Symphony*. The recording confirms that impression. Mennin could not have a more worthy model, but I do hope he finds his own legs before long. In the meantime he remains, as he has been for years, one of the most promising talents on the crowded musical scene. I almost forgot to say that all of the recordings are being made and pressed by Columbia, hence reproductive quality is comparable to the best.

ANTHROPOLOGY A LA CARTE

▲COLUMBIA has issued the first 14 of a projected 30-plus de luxe albums that will comprise its "World Library of Folk and Primitive Music." Each of the discs (SLs 204-217) is elaborately annotated by one or another authority under the general editorship of Alan Lomax. The premium price of \$6.95 is justified in most instances by the superior quality of the contents.

In numerical order, the initials' volumes are as follows: I—Ireland (the western counties, recorded and edited by Lomax and Seamus Ennis); II—French Africa (edited by André Schaeffner and Gilbert Rouget); III—England (edited by Lomax and Peter Kennedy); IV—France (edited by Cl. Marcel-Dubois and Maguy Andral from the collection of the National Musée des Arts et Traditions Populaires); V—Australia and New Guinea (edited by Prof. A. P. Elkin); VI—Scotland (edited by Lomax with the MacLeans of Raasay, Hamish Henderson and William Montgomerie); VII—Indonesia (edited by Dr. Japp Kunst of the Indische Museum, Amsterdam); VIII—Canada (edited by Dr. Marius Barbeau of the National Museum of Canada); IX—Venezuela (edited by Juan Liscano); X—British

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East Africa (edited by Hugh Tracey of the African Music Society); XI—*Japan, the Ryukyus, Formosa and Korea* (collected and edited by Genjiro Masu for the Japanese Music Institute); XII—*India* (recorded and edited with notes and translations by Prof. Alain Danielou of the University of Benares); XIII—*Spain* (edited by Lomax); and XIV—*Yugoslavia* (recorded by Peter Kennedy with the aid of the Yugoslav Council for Science and Culture).

Not to minimize the positive aspects of this enterprise, let it be said at once that the batch at hand includes some stinkers. Avoid the Yugoslavian volume altogether; it was recorded in a hotel ballroom, and mostly off-mike at that. The English volume I found dull indeed, probably because so many wonderful samplings of this rich folk heritage already are available elsewhere. To some extent this applies also to the French contribution, much of which is execrable reproductively. And the Japanese album is inadequately annotated to say the very least.

Otherwise the collection is due the highest praise. The most notable achievements, in my estimation, are the volumes devoted to India, Venezuela, Australia, Indonesia and Spain. But it would be folly to single out the musically most interesting when that is not the point of this project at all. Students of this or that esthetic persuasion may properly concentrate their attentions on any one volume with endless fascination and profit; to this audience, whose motives may be either musical or anthropological, the mass of material and its accurately comprehensive text coverage will be important. I am directing this brief notice rather to the general music lover, whose goal presumably is auditory titillation and edification. These folk will want to pick and choose from the enormous selection. Since nothing could be more subjective than one's preferences in exotica, deponent had better say no more lest this piece stretch out to ten times its assigned length, which would be about the space one would need to cover the whole matter in detail.

—J.L.

April, 1955

OPERA SPOTLIGHT

DONIZETTI: *L'Elisir d'amore*: (Opera in 2 Acts); Margherita Carosia (Adina), Nicola Monti (Nemorino), Tito Gobbi (Belcore), Melchiorre Luise (Dr. Dulcamara), Loretta di Lelio (Giannetta), Orchestra and Chorus of the Rome Opera conducted by Gabriele Santini. RCA Victor set LM-6024, 2 discs, \$7.96.

ROSSINI: *L'Italiana in Algeria* (Opera in 2 Acts); Mario Petri (Mustafa), Graziella Sciutti (Elvira), Cesare Valetti (Lindoro), Gioletta Simionato (Isabella), Mafalda Masini (Zulma), Enrico Campi (Haly), Marcello Cortis (Taddeo). Orchestra and Chorus of La Scala conducted by Carlo Maria Giulini. Angel set 3529-B, 2 discs, \$11.90.

OPERATIC RECITAL: *Il Barbiere de Siviglia*—*Una voce poco fa* (Rossini); *Don Carlos*—*O don fatale* (Verdi); *I Capuleti ed i Montecchi*—*Deh! tu bel anima* (Bellini); *La Cenerentola*—*Nagui all' affano*—*Non piu mesta* (Rossini); Gioletta Simionato with Orchestra of the *Accademia di Santa Cecilia*, Rome, conducted by Franco Ghione. London 10" LD-9162, \$2.98.

PUCCINI: *Manon Lescaut* (Opera in 4 Acts); Renata Tebaldi (Manon), Mario del Monaco (Des Grieux), Mario Boriello (Lescaut), Fernando Corena (Geronte), Piero di Palma (Edmondo), Antonio Sacchetti (Innkeeper), Luisa Ribachi (A Singer), others, Chorus and Orchestra of the *Accademia di Santa Cecilia*, Rome, conducted by Francesco Molinari Pradelli. London set LLA-28, 3 discs, \$11.94.

VERDI: *La Traviata* (Opera in 3 Acts); Renata Tebaldi (Violetta), Gianni Poggi (Alfredo), Aldo Protti (Germont), Piero di Palma (Gaston), Antonio Sacchetti (Doulphol), Dario Caselli (Marquis), Ivan Sardi (Doctor), Mario Bianchi (Joseph), Angela Vercelli (Flora), Rina Cavallari (Annina), Pier Gradella (Ser-

vant of Flora), Luigi Mancini (Commissionaire), Chorus and Orchestra of the *Accademia di Cecilia*, Rome, conducted by Francesco Molinari Prandelli. London LLA-26, 3 discs, \$11.94.

VERDI: *Il Ballo in Maschera* (Opera in 3 Acts); Jan Peerce (Riccardo), Robert Merrill (Renato), Herva Nelli (Amelia), Claramae Turner (Ulrica), Virginia Haskins (Oscar), George Cehanovsky (Silvano), Nicola Moscona (Sam), Norman Scott (Tom), John Carmen Rossi (A Judge and a Servant), NBC Symphony Orchestra, Robert Shaw Chorale, Arturo Toscanini (Conductor). RCA Victor LM-6112, 3 discs, \$11.94. **THE SAME:** Ferruccio Tagliavini (Riccardo), Giuseppe Valdengo (Renato), Maria Curtis Verna (Amelia), Pia Tassinari (Ulrica), Maria Erato (Oscar), Alberto Albertini (Silvano), Mario Stefanoni (Sam), Vito Susca (Tom), Emilio Renzi (Judge & Servant), Orchestra and Chorus of Radiotelevisione Italiana, Turin, conducted by Angelo Questa. Cetra B-1249, 2 discs, \$9.96.

VERDI: *La Forza del Destino* (Opera in 4 Acts); Plinio Clabassi (Marchese), Maria Meneghini Callas (Leonora), Carlo Tagliabue (Don Carlo), Richard Tucker (Don Alvaro), Elena Nicolai (Preziosilla), Nicola Rossi-Lemeni (Padre Guardiano), Renato Capecchi (Fra Melitone), Rina Cavallari (Curra), Gino Del Signore (Trabucco), Dario Caselli (Mayor & Surgeon), Orchestra and Chorus of La Scala, Milan, conducted by Tullio Serafin. Angel 3531-C, 3 discs, \$14.94.

PAISIELLO: *Il Duello* (Comic Opera in 1 Act); Eva De Luca, Angela Vercelli, Tatiana Bulgaron, Vittoria Mastroianni, Alfredo Nobile, Ivo Vinco, Teodoro Rovetta, Gino Viziono, Orchestra da Camera dell'Istituto Fonografico Italiano conducted by Ugo Rapalo. Haydn Society HSL-130, \$5.95.

▲ONE might dedicate this array of operatic releases to the glory of Italian opera. Their presentation would occupy 252

seven whole evenings in an opera house by linking the Donizetti and the Paisiello in one bill. The novelties are the latter and Rossini's *The Italian Woman in Algiers*. The Donizetti is a re-release of the HMV set which was reviewed in our August 1954 issue. It is a better performance than the earlier Cetra release with some lovely singing from Margherita Carosio and overall better orchestral direction. It is also a better recording, an example of HMV's new high fidelity technique which loses some of its richness in the present issue. Judicious cuts are employed in this performance. The advantage of the Victor set over the HMV release, besides its cheaper price, is the inclusion of a complete libretto in Italian and English.

The Rossini opera is well presented and a joyful experience it proves. The recording is excellent, comparable to the best of Angel's La Scala releases. Simionato sings the florid music as no one I can recall since Conchita Supervia. Though she misses some of the latter's scintillation, hers is the smoother vocalism. The cast is generally adept though Mario Petri's Mustafà is vocally on the weighty side for his music, which may account for the omission of his "patter" aria in the first act. Cuts have been made in the recitatives—probably for the good—and, besides the aria mentioned, Haly's *Le femmine d'Italia* is omitted. One can regret the loss of the arias, especially the latter, but not the shortening of the recitatives. Without knowledge of the cuts, one would presume the opera was presented as Rossini wrote it. Carlo Maria Giulini's orchestral direction is clear, precise and cleanly phrased. One does not hear a dozen bars of the overture without realizing that here is a true Rossini conductor that is alert to the animation and sensitivity of the music.

Simionato's operatic recital deserves to be considered at this point because it reveals her in different characterizations. While she does not efface memories of others, she sings with assurance and fine tonal qualities. There is no question that the lady has vocal charm and emotional appeal. Her Rossini arias are

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smoothly sung though the latter part of *Una voce* lacks sparkle, but how much better and sensible this aria sounds in the original mezzo version. Her *Cenerentola* aria is not quite as excitingly sung as in the Cetra set but her expressive artistry is better served by a much better orchestral accompaniment. The novelty here is the aria from Bellini's setting of the Romeo and Juliet tale. This touching air is sung by Romeo in the tomb scene to the slumbering Juliet. The part of Romeo in Bellini's opera was written for a mezzo-soprano to create the illusion of boyishness. Simionato sings here with expressive beauty. I found this operatic recital a pleasurable one, though I do not think it represents the gifted Simionato entirely at her best.

The new *Manon Lescaut* and *La Traviata* introduce Renata Tebaldi in new roles in which the magnificence of her vocal accomplishments are the feature of both sets. Those of us who heard Tebaldi at the Metropolitan are aware of her many gifts, one of which—her outstanding abilities as an actress—others might not realize. Yet, I submit that every phrase she sings is planned mentally, if not always emotionally, as a singing actress. And this is conveyed in both these performances. Her singing at the Metropolitan disclosed some shrillness in loud passages in her high voice which is not manifest in either of these operatic recordings. Her exquisite pianissimo remains one of her greatest artistic attributes. As *Manon*, she seems rather mature, especially in the opening act, and she hardly suggests the temptress in the second act duet. But how beautifully she sings this music and how knowingly! Both she and Del Monaco give of dramatic fervor. The noted tenor is a full-blooded and vital Des Grieux whose vocal impact is often exciting if not completely in keeping with the intentions of the composer. There is, however, much artistry in his Des Grieux though vocally it is all of one color. Borriello is an excellent Lescaut and Corena a fine Geronte. The balance of the cast are competent. Pradelli's orchestral direc-

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tion is typically Italian—dramatically exciting, musically efficient but lacking in subtlety, and always on easy terms with the singers. Wonderful sound throughout—a job well done by London's knowing engineers.

First and foremost, Tebaldi as Violetta is lovely in sound. The beauty of her voice makes up for the shortcomings of her first act. Thereafter, she is mistress of the occasion, bringing pathos to her interpretation and some exquisite tonal modulations. Though she lacks the brilliance in the finale of the first act, her acting instincts are right as revealed in the music. Despite the handicap of a second-rate Alfredo and a competent, but far from polished Germont, Tebaldi succeeds in making this a distinguished operatic offering. Her second and third acts are wonderfully acted in song; her *Addio del passato* a memorable moment. It is unfortunate that Poggi is so insensitive to coloration and nuance in his duets where Tebaldi's perceptive artistry makes his contribution almost valueless. Protti does better, though he is far from a completely persuasive Germont. The only real rival to this set is the Toscanini one, but those who love a lovely voiced Violetta will want this release. The smaller roles are competently sung with the exception of the Flora. The conductor is no Toscanini, but he handles the orchestra knowingly in the traditional Italian manner, making more of the preludes than the accompanying sections, and always working with rather than against the singers. Excellent recording.

The Toscanini-directed version of Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* is among the greatest operatic performances on records. He proves by the passion and vigor of his unflagging direction that this opera—which has been too often underestimated—is one of Verdi's greatest scores. Toscanini's singers are subservient to his rule, but they acquit themselves commendably and competently. The finest singing is by Virginia Haskins. Nelli and Peerce lack the requisite appeal vocally to make their roles memorable, but both are gifted musicians. The maes-

tro in deference to them remade the opening section of the second act after the broadcast performances from which this set were taken, and it must be said that both artists profited by the re-make. Merrill is a sonorous Renato, if not a memorable one. The balance of the cast are well enough chosen. When all things are said and done, one feels that it is the art of Toscanini that makes his singers living characters by the surge and whispered magic of his orchestral direction.

Cetra's *Ballo* offers better singing from the principals, but the orchestral direction is tepid and unimaginative after Toscanini. Moreover, the recording is not as splendid in sound as the Victor set where the orchestra is a magnificent living presence. One has only to compare the opening scenes of Acts 2 and 3 in the two performances to realize Toscanini's magic. Questa reveals little imagination in comparison, only an ability to keep things smooth and shipshape. Maria Curtis Verna is a newcomer to me, but she sings with feeling and generally lovely tonal quality. Her dark hued voice is especially suited to Amelia. Tagliavini, that gifted but uneven singer, gives one of his best performances on records as Riccardo. And Valdengo is a more rewarding singing actor than Merrill. Pia Tassinari is always an artist of distinction and she sings the mezzo role of Ulrica with rich sound though not with the vocal splendor of a true contralto. To my way of thinking, she is a more distinguished artist than Clara-mae Turner in the Victor set. Maria Erato as Oscar is not the equal of Virginia Haskins, either vocally or musically. The rest of the cast are not particularly distinguished but they acquit themselves competently. The drawback of this set is the reproduction which suffers from being crowded onto two discs with a loss of quality as each record side progresses toward the middle. Moreover, the singers are given prominence over the orchestra and the breaks too often fall in the middle of scenes at awkward points. If you want to play a certain section,

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you will find it difficult to locate it without possibly damaging a record by having to set the needle down here and there.

Angel's *La Forza del Destino* is as fine a performance as I have heard since the days of Caruso and Ponselle. To be sure Richard Tucker is not a Caruso, but he is an assured and musically efficient Don Alvaro. I believe that he has sung this role successfully at La Scala, where I would assume that he acquired some Italian habits of sobbing and overstress of drama in text. Nevertheless, he is a vast improvement on the others who essayed this role in former sets. It is Maria Callas who is the true star of this performance. Like Rosa Ponselle before her, she seems to have been made for the role of Leonora. Her portrayal of Leonora may be less vocally opulent at times than her predecessor, but it is more compelling dramatically for she exploits the tragic elements of the character and, in my estimation, proves that as an operatic tragedienne she ranks among the greatest of our times. Her singing here is virtually flawless, though some of her high tones are strident and lacking in coloration, but her *mezzo-voce* is lovely as demonstrated in her Prayer in the first act and her *Pace, Pace* in the final act as well as elsewhere. She lives the role as no other artist I have heard in modern times. Her sense of timing and her infallible rhythmic sense are the attributes of a great artist. The veteran Carlo Tagliabue sings smoothly. He is an artist of vocal distinction, though he lacks the power to achieve true dramatic climaxes. In the duets with Tucker, his voice is often obscured by the orchestra, but one would rather hear a baritone of his artistic attainments than one who belted loudly. I cannot recall when I have heard a finer Preziosilla than Elena Nicolai's both vocally and dramatically. Rossi-Lemeni sings smoothly, but his voice still seems clouded which makes his impersonation of Padre Guardiano less vital than others. Renato Capecchi, remembered for his fine Manfredo in *L'Amore dei tre Re*, proves his artistic

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versatility as Fra Melitone though he is deprived of his big scene since Scenes 1 through 3 of Act 4 are omitted from the present recording. Outside of this major cut, only minor excisions employed in the opera house are made. The balance of the cast are assigned to experienced singers who acquit themselves competently. In my estimation, this La Scala performance is as fine as any given at the Metropolitan in recent years. The orchestral direction of Tullio Serafin is efficient and dramatically urgent. As for the recording, it is excellent.

The one-act comic opera of Giovanni Paisiello is a museum piece with an absolutely absurd libretto which aims to be satirical, but ends up being just silly. Paisiello was a famous operatic composer in his day—his *Barber of Seville* was a great success until Rossini wrote his. Paisiello's importance lies, historically speaking, as the operatic link between Mozart and Rossini. There is no doubt that he was musically gifted as the all-too-few arias in the present offering show; some of them are distinctly charming, with echoes of Mozartean graces. But the long stretches of recitatives that prevail in *The Duel* are as boring as they are verbally banal. The singers are all second-class artists and the conductor is too musically cautious for the good of a score that obviously demands more brilliant treatment. Undoubtedly, there are scores by Paisiello that are worthy of reviving—his *Barber* might even sustain interest—but *The Duel* does not. Perhaps Haydn Society might retrieve the arias from the chaff and issue them on an independent disc; they would be worth acquiring. The reproduction is quite realistic and well enough balanced, but obviously this is a studio recording.

VERDI: *Il Ballo in Maschera*—*Highlights*; Zinka Milanov, Roberta Peters, Marian Anderson, Jan Peerce, Leonard Warren, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra conducted by Dimitri Mitropoulos. RCA Victor LM-1911, \$3.98.

▲THIS record celebrates a historical event—the début of Marian Anderson April, 1955

in an operatic role at the Metropolitan. That event should have taken place long ago, when this singer was in her prime. Though she affirms her fine musicianship, singing with musical care and understanding, her voice no longer has the bloom of her great days. Yet, she makes an imposing Ulrica, dramatically impressive and even commanding in characterization. Her lower tones are unsteady but her higher ones are firm and generally well molded. Leonard Warren is the true star of this recording, singing his two arias with dramatic puissance and vocal polish. Zinka Milanov is uneven, some of her high tones are strident and poorly focused but her *pianissimi* are caressing. Mr. Peerce is in fine fettle, and Miss Peters sings her lone aria with sparkle. Mitropoulos reveals himself as a gifted operatic conductor; his presence is omnipresent. The recording is wonderfully realistic. The highlights are the Overture, Renato's first act aria *Alla vita*, Ulrica's aria *Re dell'abisso*, Amelia's *Ma dall'arido stelo* and the Love Duet which follows. The Trio at the end of Act 2, *Ahimé! S'appressa alcun*, Amelia's air *Morro, ma prima in grazia*, Renato's *Eri tu*, Riccardo's aria from Act 3 and the Page's air, *Saper vorreste*. —J.N.

BIZET: *Les Pecheurs de Perles* (Opera in 3 Acts); Pierette Alarie (Leila), Leopold Simoneau (Nadir), René Bianco (Zurga), Xavier Delpraz (Nourabad), Orchestra of the Concerts Lamoureux and the Elisabeth Brasseur Choir, conducted by Jean Fournet. Epic SC-6002, 2 records, \$7.96.

▲THIS recording of Bizet's early opera is the first operatic release by Epic—a maiden endeavor worthy of attention. Recorded in Paris with well-known local artists, this is the second issue of *Les Pecheurs de Perles*. Renaissance placed the first upon the market early in 1952. Progress in the reproduction of large and varied forces is to be noted if you care to compare the two recordings. Bizet's opera, with its pseudo-exoticisms and its long curving melodies, is a charming one, but one cannot sidestep a feeling of regret

that an unrecorded French opera—*Hérodiade, Le Roi d'Ys, Ariane et Barbe-Bleue, Mireille, Hamlet, Marouf* or above all, *Louise*—had not received the attention of Epic's first effort. For, truth to tell, there are elements in the earlier version of this opera, which are preferable—notably the Leila of Mattiwilda Dobbs and the Zurga of Jean Borthayre. Not that Pierette Alerie and René Bianco are not completely adequate, but they are just less pleasing in these roles. Miss Alarie sings fluently but without Miss Dobbs' vocal charm, while M. Bianco, an Algerian baritone, very active at the Paris Opéra today, is often rough-voiced and lacks the polish of Borthayre's sonorous vocalism.

Superior, however, is the present set's Nadir, Leopold Simoneau. His smooth tenor encompasses this music with style, especially the celebrated Romance, *Je crois entendre encore*, which is sung in the original key (no mean feat!). The conductor, Jean Fournet, doesn't seem to have quite the flare of Renaissance's Leibowitz, but the present recording is considerably more transparent. Small cuts, that may be traditional in the opera house, are observed. The fact that Epic places the identical material on two records, instead of Renaissance's three may swing you definitely in the direction of the new version.

—M. de S.

DEBUSSY: *Pelléas et Mélisande* (Lyric Drama in 5 Acts); Janine Micheau (Mélisande), Camille Maurane (Pelléas), Michel Roux (Golaud), Xavier Depraz (Arkel), Rita Gorr (Geneviève), Annik Simon (Yniold), Marcel Vigneron (doctor and shepherd); the Orchestra of the Concerts Lamoureux and the Elisabeth Brasseur Choir conducted by Jean Fournet. Epic LP set SC-6003, 3 discs, \$11.94.

▲THIS, the second operatic venture of Epic, is the third complete recording of Debussy's lyric drama in the history of recorded music. The present recording is brilliantly clear and transparent. If one looks upon *Pelléas et Mélisande* in terms of mezzo-tints, like a vague and impressionistic canvas, high fidelity will

very likely dispel the Corot-like atmosphere, for here everything is of a jewel-like clarity.

Like Ansermet's performance of the opera on London discs, Epic's account, under the excellent beat of Jean Fournet, leans towards the theatrically dramatic. Fournet doesn't quite match Ansermet and his famous orchestra, but this accomplishment is nevertheless of high rank, and the purchaser of this set can rest assured that he will be buying an authentic performance. Janine Micheau, who has been alternating Mélisande with her usual coloratura roles at the Opéra-Comique since 1937, instills much of the right atmosphere into her work. She is, as Lucrezia Bori was, a far better vocalist than are most of the ladies who have specialized in this role. Many of the soprano's lines emerge as beautifully balanced phrases. I am tempted to rank Camille Maurane as the best of the three Pelléases on discs. Here you will find ardor and tenderness in a performance which enlists a fine young voice that has no trouble with the high climaxes. Mr. Maurane is especially good in the Tower Scene. Contrast is achieved in Michel Roux's Golaud. Employing a resonant and resilient baritone, Mr. Roux obtains much of that middle-aged, iron-grey quality which seems so characteristic of this role. Xavier Depraz, a young basso with a voice of stunning breadth and sonority, makes an imposing Arkel, but Rita Gorr, as Geneviève, sounds uncertain and immature in the important reading of the letter.

A choice between the three recorded versions emerges as a fairly difficult decision. If you like your *Pelléas* dreamy and other-worldish, maybe the Victor set under Désormière should be your choice. If you insist on the latest recording techniques, you will turn from that set, which was achieved during the German occupation of Paris, and give your attention to either London or Epic. Ansermet and his orchestra are a serious consideration in favor of the former, but the present version has a good orchestra, a knowledgeable conductor, and some admirably selected singers. Whichever your choice becomes, you can be assured that all con-

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cerned in these recordings are thoroughly conversant with the style of this unique work of art.

—M. de S.

GUSTAV MAHLER'S 'EIGHTH SYMPHONY'

MAHLER: *Symphony No. 8 in E Flat Major* ("Symphony of a Thousand")
Annelies Kupper (Soprano I; Magna Peccatrix), Hilde Zadek (Soprano II; Una Poenitentium), Corry Bijster (Soprano; Mater Gloriosa), Annie Hermes (Contralto I; Mulier Samaritana), Lore Fischer (Contralto II; Maria Aegyptiaca), Annie Woud (Contralto), Lorenz Fehenberger (Tenor; Doctor Marianus), Frans Vroons (Tenor), Herman Schey (Baritone; Pater Ecstaticus), Gottlob Frick (Baritone; Pater Profundus), David Hollestelle (Baritone); the combined Rotterdam Choirs and Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Eduard Flipse. Epic set SC-6004, 2 discs, \$9.96.

▲MAHLER'S *Eighth* was written for a very large orchestra with eight vocal soloists, two antiphonal mixed choruses and a boys' choir. Its two parts are respectively a Latin setting of the medieval hymn *Veni, Creator Spiritus* (*Come Thou, Creator Infinite*) and a German setting, the final scene of Goethe's *Faust, Part II*. In the shorter first part the solo voices are like the concertino of a concerto grosso for voices wherein solo ensemble and chorus are in continuous interchange or combination, while in the second part there are in addition extended passages for individual solo voices. The rapturous theme borne in common by these two outwardly diverse texts is given greater depth and perspective by Mahler's thematic linkage of them. The work is in no sense a mere cantata, but the first completely choral symphony. It is fully developed, and every bar has its logical thematic antecedent or consequent. Since its triumphant *première* in Munich in 1910 (Mahler's last summer on this earth), the *Eighth* has always had a deep effect on

its audience quite unlike anything else by this composer.

Columbia recently released an inferior recording made under Hermann Scherchen at the Vienna festival in 1951. Now comes another festival presentation, recorded before a Rotterdam audience on July 3, 1954, under the direction of Eduard Flipse. Nothing was spared to make this performance a worthy one. An exhibition hall was converted into a concert hall specially for this production, and its large population of sparrows painstakingly removed. The eight soloists required by the score, often skimmed down to seven, as in the Scherchen performance, were increased to eleven. The total ensemble is 1100 persons. As a recording, this Epic release is certainly far from ideal, yet without going into detail it is already miles ahead of the other release, because it is always beautiful in sound, which the Columbia decidedly is not. The latter is flat and distorted, levelled out in dynamics in the *Veni, Creator* to a uniform brazenness seldom exceeded; uniform, that is, except when the concerted soloists are singing into their special microphone, when it becomes a contest in high-level distortion topped by shattering vocalism.

The Epic recording is above all natural in sound, with quite a good resonant bass, and whatever is lost in the process is due to the unusually large hall and the more usual concert-performance hazards. As far as sheer balance is concerned, the recordings complement many of each others' lacks. In the orchestra, for instance, the Columbia strings lack body, while Epic lacks woodwind tone, the brass being variable. Among the handsomest sounds in Epic are the timpani (against the impoverished sound in Columbia) and the horns (and what wonderful ensemble!). In Columbia the orchestral interlude in the *Veni* has about twice as much presence and bite, but this sound has nothing in common with the perspectives of its environing music, and is tonally displeasing; the deep bell is heard only at the beginning, and inspires not the smallest wish to hear it again. The Epic provides the right pitch, and it is audible throughout.

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The most serious default of Epic in the very difficult *Veni* is that of the organ (although that of the final off-stage brass peroration is more spectacular), because the organ sound is woven into the whole movement and is therefore more structurally functional. Though Mahler never uses the organ in this movement except to give us the "*volles Werk*," his placement and rhythmic timing of it are still subtle and individual, as in the statement of the double fugue, *Ductore sic te praevio*, and its non-emergence over the orchestra deprives the picture of much of its special quality. The clarity of the organ in Columbia is one of the few redeeming features of that recording. In other respects this movement is much more resonant in the Epic; the whole effect is grander even though less aggressively overwhelming, and on the basis of its never-fading excitement plus the beauty of sound revealed here, one is almost tempted to proclaim it the finest thing Mahler ever did. At least if the essence of Mahler's art is truly counterpoint, this is an important aspect of it not elsewhere revealed.

Tempo Differences

Flipse's *Veni* is just a little slower than Scherchen's, while both are in utter contrast to the very lively tempo adopted by Stokowski in New York. My own feeling about the direction *Allegro impetuoso* is much closer to what the impetuous Stokowski makes of it, but the apparent reverberation period in the Epic version suggests that in these surroundings his interpretation might tend to blur. However, the work should (and must if it is ever to have a definitive recording) be done in a studio or hall under controlled conditions, though of what size and by what millionaires are matters one can scarcely contemplate. No one conducts this movement very badly, given his chosen tempo, so there is no need to go into details.

The *Faust* part is a different kettle of fish in every respect. So much more apparently simple in essence, yet how mauled! One can almost see the conductor relaxing his vigilance to the point of hypnosis. Not that Flipse, or Scherchen, 258

does anything very wrong, but what this music seems to need is what Toscanini does to Verdi, and so far Stokowski seems to be it; he is the only one of these conductors who never allows the phrasing to sag and spread. One feels that his recent New York stint was in essence a pretty faithful revival of his 1916, though it obviously never achieved the perfection of detail that might be expected in the nine performances of that more leisurely time.

The instrumental prelude to this part is quite stunning in the Epic, and better interpreted. In Columbia the recording of this prelude is technically more acceptable than elsewhere, yet even here the sound is harsh, and what little whiff of Elysian atmosphere filters through is quickly dispelled when the first horn flubs, his entry; the whole thing ends with a grotesquely hideous trumpet sound. I am very fond of Schey's *Pater Ecstasticus* and Frick's *Pater Profundus*. Though Frick is listed as a baritone and Scherchen's Hugo Wiener a bass, they sound just the opposite. Frick is every bit as good as George London was in New York and Hollywood. Hermes' *Mulier Samaritana* and Zadek's *Poenitentium* are quite a pleasure after Rosette Anday and Daniza Illitsch. Anday combines a constant tremolo with a scooping predilection and most unprepossessing low tones; Illitsch is piercing and ungrateful.

The harmonium, which displaces the organ in much of the second part, is just a trifle more distinct in the Epic, but neither is sufficient. It is too bad that the mandolin goes for naught in the Epic, which certainly can't be said of Columbia. Also the piccolo solo that precedes the final *Chorus mysticus* is terribly thin. The opening of this chorus is very beautiful, and Flipse succeeds better than did Scherchen in realizing Mahler's difficult request for no crescendo for the first 29 bars. As in the *Veni*, the final peroration is the least impressive part of the recording, due not only to lack of organ and brass (the first organ chords sound like they came from the other end of Rotterdam), but also percussion. The Columbia

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ending is also poor in the latter respect, but not that poor, and brass and organ are adequate. Epic supplies excellent notes by Henri-Louis de la Grange, but publishes them with a number of misprints. This company also mistakenly titles the work as being in the Key of E Major.

—Jack Diether

(Mr Diether is at present writing a book on Mahler and his music.—Ed.)

Editorial Notes

(Continued from page 246)

Our review came too late to include it in the recommended sets of the year. Who now can exclaim: "What price human interest?"

* * *

We are happy to report to the many readers who have written to us about Mr. George Varkonyi's planned series on Loud-Speaker Enclosures that his next article will appear in the May issue. Pressure of business interests has prevented Mr. Varkonyi from following up his series earlier.

The Hungarian Quartet Plays Beethoven

BEETHOVEN: *Quartets—Vol. 2* (Middle)—No. 7 in F major, Op. 59, No. 1; No. 8 in E minor, Op. 59, No. 2; No. 9 in C major, Op. 59, No. 3 ("Rasoumovsky" Nos. 1/3); No. 10 in E flat Major, Op. 74 ("Harp"); No. 11 in F minor, Op. 95 ("Serioso"); Hungarian Quartet. Angel 3513, 3 discs, \$14.94.

▲The Hungarian Quartet continues its project of recording the complete Beethoven string quartets with the five of the so-called "middle" period. There can be nothing but praise for the crystal-

clear recording, the attractive container (which also contains extremely well-printed miniature scores published by Heugel et Cie. of Paris), the silent surfaces and above all, the vigorous and sweeping performances. The instrumentalists are extremely efficient—they toss of the difficult passages as if they were mere child's play which makes their concentration on the music the more remarkable. Their tempi are on the fast side, except in slow movements, and even here, we seem to feel a vitality and freshness that is stimulating. Although some of the works are contained on a single side (Op. 59, No. 3, Op. 74 and Op. 95), there is never the feeling of rushing or hurrying. The fast tempi create a tension, perhaps, but not confusion. In addition, it might be mentioned that all the repeats are observed.

Direct comparison with other recordings leads one to the conclusion that there are many ways of presenting these marvelous scores. Playing the Budapest records immediately after the Hungarians', one is struck by the superiority of the English recording, and the brisker tempi. The Budapest group seems hampered by the Stradivari instruments, which do not have the vitality or the same type of suavity of the ensemble's own strings. The Veghs give more lyrical readings than the Hungarians, which may well appeal more to some listeners. The Pascal versions are less persuasive; they do not have the finesse or suavity of the other versions, or the technical accomplishments. There are numerous isolated recordings that will have their special appeal. The Paganini versions of Op. 59 and Op. 74 are tonally beautiful and will undoubtedly satisfy those who admire this type of playing. The Quartetto Italiano version of Op. 59, No. 1 contains some fantastically lovely playing and the recording is exceptional. The reader faced with the dilemma of getting the complete Beethoven Quartets has several alternatives. If he likes vigorous, objective readings, impeccably recorded, he will be more than satisfied with the Hungarian Quartet's performances.

—R.H.R.

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Giuletta Simionato as
Isabella in Rossini's
'L'Italiana in Algeria'

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TALKING

ABOUT . . .

... **Giuletta Simionato**, the gifted Italian mezzo-soprano whose latest claim to being the foremost exponent of the florid mezzo roles in Rossini's operas is substantiated in *L'Italiana in Algeri* (Angel) and a recital record, containing two Rossini arias (London). In these latest recordings she reveals herself as a mistress of a lost art. Previously, in Cetra releases, she was heard as Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* and as Angelina in *La Cenerentola*. In all of these recordings, this singer's rhythmic impulse and vocal control are exceptional. Only one other mezzo-soprano in this century, the late Conchita Supervia, has possessed the vocal equipment and technique to cope with the coloratura roles that Rossini devised for so many of his operatic heroines, but she lacked the vocal smoothness of Giuletta Simionato. Since the re-opening of La Scala in 1946, Simionato has occupied a conspicuous place in the artistic roster. She was to have made her debut this season at the Metropolitan Opera, making an appearance as Orfeo in Gluck's opera, but other commitments seem to have prevented her presence. She already has been heard at the San Francisco and Chicago Opera Houses, where she duplicated the successes that she has had since the war in her native land, Spain, Portugal, France, England and South America. Born of a Sardinian mother and a Venetian father, Giuletta Simionato spent her childhood in Sardinia, where she also began her vocal studies. Later, she went to Padua to study with Guido Palumbo, under whose guidance she progressed rapidly and became the recipient in 1933 of first prize at Florence in a "bel canto" contest. She sang her first small roles at Padua and Florence and later was heard in similar parts at La Scala. Her important debut as an operatic artist, she says, was in 1938 at Florence in Pizzetti's *L'Orseolo*. Other engagements followed at La Scala, where during the war she was heard as Rosina and Cherubino among other important parts. Besides the Rossini roles, for which she has a distinctive flair, her favorites are Dido in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, Leonora in Donizetti's *La Favorita*, Amneris in Verdi's *Aida*, Fedora in Giordano's opera of the same name, and Oktavian in Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*. Another favorite role is Romeo in Bellini's *I Capuletti e I Montecchi*, an opera practically unknown in this country, from which she has recorded an aria in her London recital disc. Her repertory includes roles in 54 operas. She is equally successful in lyric and dramatic parts, as her assignments demonstrate in the above-mentioned Rossini operas and also those in Cetra's issues of *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *Aida*, and *Il Matrimonio Segreto*. Of this artist, the discerning Harold Rosenthal, editor of the English publication *Opera*, has this to say in the February 1955 issue of *The Gramophone*: "I think it can safely be said that Giuletta Simionato is one of the few contemporary practitioners of the art of bel canto."

Notes and Reviews

THERE IS IN SOULS a sympathy with sounds, and as the mind is pitched the ear is pleased with melting airs or martial, brisk or grave; some chord in unison with what we hear is touched within us, and the heart replies.

—William Couper

ORCHESTRA

BEETHOVEN: *Concerto No. 2 in B flat major, Op. 19*; **MOZART:** *Concerto No. 15 in B flat major, K. 450*; Solomon (piano), Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by André Cluytens (Beethoven) & Otto Ackermann (Mozart). RCA Victor LHMV-12, \$4.98.

▲SOLOMON gives a vivid account of the Beethoven, neither playing it down nor blowing it up beyond its dimensions. The only serious rival on LP is the Backhaus, which has the disadvantage of being on two sides of a 10" disc (London LS-630). The Mozart on the reverse side, also in the key of B flat, has been recorded many times before, but this performance is of special interest, because it seems to be the English pianist's first recording of a Mozart work. He has the style, tone, clarity of line and feeling for this lovely score, and he uses Mozart's original cadenzas. Fine support is provided by the Philharmonia Orchestra under Cluytens and Ackermann, and the recordings, made in Kingsway Hall, London, are clean and well balanced, without too much resonance, with the Mozart having an edge over the Beethoven.

—R.H.R.

● **BRITTEN:** *Sinfonia da Requiem, Op. 20*; Benjamin Britten conducting the Danish State Radio Symphony Orchestra *Diversions for Piano (Left Hand) and Orchestra, Op. 21*; Julius Katchen and the London Symphony Orchestra con-

ducted by Mr. Britten. London LL-1123, \$3.98.

▲BOTH of these works were written in Britten's twenty-seventh year (1940) during his visit to America. They represent him at two different phases—the first gloomy and subjective, the second joyful and objective. It can be assumed that the death of his mother in 1938, as well as his religious convictions, contributed to the *Sinfonia da Requiem*. Erwin Stein, in the book on Britten edited by Mitchell and Keller, tells us that its title "and still more the sub-titles with their reference to the Requiem Mass, show that the composer was not aiming at an abstract symphony, but at finding the adequate form for the expression of defined sentiments and reflections." While this work has been rightfully called "an orchestral *tour de force*" (which is substantiated in London's wonderfully realistic recording), its emotional content is less persuasive than its technical achievements. The slow opening movement (*Lacrymosa*) seems born of head rather than heart. The scherzo (*Dies Irae*) is powerful drama, and the finale (*Requiem Aeternam*) an appeasement in which the composer creates a sombre poetic mood. While an ingenious work, the *Diversions* is not one of Britten's most appealing compositions, as I said previously in reviewing the Rapp-Rother recording (January 1954). Here the composer was dealing fundamentally with a technical program, writing for the left hand alone (the work was composed for the one-armed pianist Paul Wittgenstein), and

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the composition lacks the overall attractiveness of Ravel's opus. I must say that Katchen and Britten give a more persuasive performance than do their German contemporaries. Indeed, the presence of the composer lends authenticity to both performances, which are handsomely recorded. —P.H.R.

■
BRUCKNER: *Symphony No. 5 in B Flat*;
WEBER: *Symphony No. 1 in C*; the Leipzig Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Gerhard Pflueger. Urania LP set URLP-239, \$11.90.

▲ONLY a dated performance under Jochum is available for comparison, and by today's reproductive standards that set is out of the running altogether. Musically, it was somewhat more faithful to Bruckner's soaring lines. His organ-like swells, however, sorely need the sonic plenitude that the New Orthophonic curve provides. Urania has taken unusual pains with this tape, so that the orchestral sound is on a par with many of our best domestic recordings, and Pflueger elicits a performance that is in keeping with the best German traditions. Bruckner partisans being a faithful lot, there is no question that they will hasten to acquire it at once. Others will want to know that the *Fifth*, with the *Fourth* and the unfinished *Ninth*, is one of Bruckner's strongest symphonies, although that is not saying a great deal for it. Its amalgam of sonata form and the cyclical-contrapuntal styles is, nonetheless, among the wonders of the literature. It sprawls a good deal, but chorale-like themes do not lend themselves to succinct handling and the fact of the matter is that Bruckner achieves a rather amazing unity despite an apparent tendency to unwind in several directions to a lot of loose ends. The little Weber work that occupies the fourth side is a pleasant enough, Haydnesque exercise in cliché that owns no perceivable distinction beyond a certain antiquarian interest that does not long endure. —J.L.

■
CHARPENTIER: *Impressions d'Italie—Suite*; **AUBERT:** *La Habanera*; *Orchestre du Théâtre National de l'Opéra*, Louis Fourester. Angel 35120, \$5.95.

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▲FRENCH audiences are most familiar with these works which have long enjoyed a conspicuous place in their concert life. The Charpentier is hardly of the same substance as the Aubert work, but it has a certain appeal in the popular genre. It is a young man's impressions of Italy, who became "dazzled with the fairyland sunniness" of that country. This is program music, rather obviously impressionistic in intent as its titles convey. The composer had a love of the people and he probably had the people in mind when he wrote this suite with its often trivial and sometimes obvious effects which he imbued with a senuous vitality. The best of the five sketches is *On the Summits*, in which the composer achieved a true poetic exultation. Aubert's *Habanera* has been described as "a symphonic dance, skillfully developed, of exotic mood and a highly coloristic orchestral style." It is the work of an expert craftsman, inspired by some lines by the poet Baudelaire. The listener may well have the incentive to return to this work, which occupies only a quarter of the disc, more often than to Charpentier's music. Rightfully, it should have prefaced the latter since, after Charpentier's picture of Naples, its elevation might not be immediately acknowledged by everyone. The performances reveal a patriot's enthusiasm for his fellow countrymen, and the recording is exceptionally fine both atmospherically and tonally.

—P.H.R.

■
HANDEL: *The Water Music* (complete); the Boyd Neel Orchestra conducted by Boyd Neel. London LP LL-1128, \$3.98.

▲ONE expected, on past performance, that Boyd Neel would turn in the definitive version of this magnificent music. One's faith is not really shattered, but one is not apt to be so sure of one's self another time. For there are peculiar accents in certain sections here—listen, for instance, to the *Bourrée* (No. 7) and the trio of No. 8—and the sections are not where one is used to finding them, either. The generally superb Hewitt-Haydn Society recording does not stack up to this latest from a strictly sonic point of view, nor is it so

impressive in its purely executive aspects. But for all the sheen of his wonderful ensemble, for all the shimmering sound that London has provided him as usual, Neel somehow seems to project his own personality rather more determinedly than Handel's. The annotations tell us that "some slight changes have been made in the order [of the movements] for the sake of better effect," principal among these being that the famous *Hornpipe in D* is placed at the very end in the manner of a peroration. To this kind of thing one cannot have any serious objection, except insofar as it implies a certain impatience with tradition. It is just this latter, as to tempi and such considerations, that unsettles the Handelian purist—and if I so classify myself, I hasten to add that I mean in the matter of spirit as distinct from the letter of the hand-me-down autograph fragments. Neel is entitled to exercise all of his conductorial prerogatives, and I cannot quarrel with him except on subjective grounds. So saying, I have to indicate a preference for Hewitt, although I intend to live with the Neel and probably I will have some second thoughts on it when next the *Water Music* turns up.

—J.L.

●
KODALY: *Concerto for Orchestra*; **PROKOFIEV:** *Scythian Suite*; respectively the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Heinz Bongartz and the Symphony Orchestra of Radio Berlin conducted by Rolf Kleinert. Urania LP URLP-7138, \$3.98.

▲THE annotator here, Paul Affelder, includes the Kodaly *Concerto* among the "important works by great composers" that were commissioned by symphony orchestras. I, am willing to be graceful about Kodály's overall claim to posterity's affections. That this is an important work, however, I vigorously dispute. In fact, I have rarely been so bored for so long. Bartók once said of his compatriot's music that "everything remains based upon the principle of balanced tonality. Yet his musical language is entirely new and expresses ideas never heard before, thus proving that tonality is not yet completely

exhausted." A wonderful testimonial, and don't think it isn't quoted in the jacket notes—but *sans* date. By the time Kodály got around to this work, which was 1940-41, his well had run dry indeed. Through its rich orchestration we discern the same old dependable bag of tricks that won repertory standing long since for the *Dances from Galanta* and the *Hary Janos* suite, but I for one cannot find any similar fertility of musical ideas. As to the *Scythian Suite*, I have to recommend the Scherchen version over this and all other more recent comers, although Kleiner certainly shepherds his forces with skill and sensitivity. He just didn't have the extraordinary good luck with his engineers that Scherchen enjoyed.

—J.L.

●
RACHMANINOV: *The Isle of the Dead—Symphonic Poem*, Op. 29; **DUKAS:** *La Péri—Poème danse*. London LL-1155, \$3.98. **RAVEL:** *Bolero*; **HONEGGER:** *Pacific 231*; **DUKAS:** *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*; **RAVEL:** *La Valse*. London LL-1156, \$3.98. All performed by L'Orchestre de la Société des Concerts du Conservatoire de Paris, conducted by Ernest Ansermet.

▲**RACHMANINOV'S** *The Isle of the Dead* remains one of his finest orchestral scores. Based on a picture of Arnold Böcklin, its gloomy subject has perhaps prevented this work from attaining the popularity it deserves. What the picture represented to the composer was obviously spiritual peace of mind and this he conveys in the poetic emotion of his music. Ansermet gives a sensitive and smooth performance of this work, and the recording is rich in sound.

Dukas' *La Péri* is far removed from his *Sorcerer's Apprentice*, yet it, too, is a masterpiece of its kind. Its subtitle "dance poem" reveals its intended relation to the theatre where, in France, it has long occupied a conspicuous place. Yet as one writer has said it "can be performed in the concert hall and still reproduce an atmospheric illusion for the imaginative listener." Dukas here was concerned with an oriental subject, which brings into play considerable chromaticism. Two

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previous performances of this work were cordially received, but Ansermet's performance surpasses them in the subtlety of the conductor's art. Moreover, the recording is more naturally realistic than the others were. It all adds up to a choice of programs.

The program of the second disc brings us returns of Ansermet's admired performances of *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* and *La Valse* in vastly improved reproduction. Of course, Ansermet gives us a fine account of the *Bolero* which may well be rated highly by the conductor's admirers, but not being a *Bolero* enthusiast I cannot give it a fair survey. Honegger's *Pacific 231*, a dated piece today belonging to the "twaddling 'twenties," is less impressive than Emery Cook's *Rail Dynamics*, yet some may consider it musical fun. It is certainly out of place in its present company. Ansermet's *La Valse* is a fine performance, but the Paray version is far more imposing both artistically and sound-wise. Here, again, *La Valse* loses some of its values in the latter part of the score which is consigned to the narrow inner grooves of the disc.

—P.H.R.

★
SAINT-SAENS: *Symphony No. 3 in C Minor, Op. 78*; Feike Asma (organ) and the Hague Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Willem Van Otterloo. Epic LP LC-3077, \$3.98.

▲MUNCH has always been my man for this work. Not even Toscanini, if you will pardon the sacrilege, evokes so expertly its esthetic time and place. The conscientious Van Otterloo keeps everything moving, but he never quite gets aloft; there is a certain squareness to the whole of his conception. The old Munch performance was a wonder, full of love and lilt and just the right kind of crash-bang. Maybe he will do it with the Bostonians now that Victor is giving him his head with the French repertoire. Until that reasonably sure eventuality comes to pass I would stick with his old Columbia version, if only because the rumble of Asma's organ will knock over your glassware if you don't keep a steady hand at the controls and that isn't the

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way this music is supposed to go. No French composer ever meant for his handiwork to frighten the neighbor's children.

—J.L.

●
SCHUBERT: *Symphony No. 5 in B Flat and Symphony No. 8 in B Minor* ("Unfinished"); the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Karl Boehm. London LP LL-1105, \$3.98.

▲TENDER, loving performances, aglow with Schubertian lilt and propelled by just the right degree of *brío*. Only on the economy Camden label is the coupling duplicated, so that any valid comparisons would have to include multiples of two discs and there is no room for that here. Anyway, you couldn't do much better than these versions, so you might as well not waste time. By my count this is the 25th *Unfinished* in the catalogue; if you want it and the *Fifth* on the same recording, you have no problem at all. Excellent sound.

—J.L.

●
SIBELIUS: *Symphony No. 2 in D, Op. 43*; members of the NBC Symphony conducted by Leopold Stokowski. RCA Victor LP LM-1854, \$3.98.

▲CYNICS may scoff at this on the recent evidence, but I find Stokowski's conception of the ageless *Op. 43* closer to the essential Sibelius than any other recorded performance since good old M-272—Koussevitzky's long-gone but never surpassed shellac version, not to be confused with his tired re-do on microgroove. I happen to disagree with the currently chi-chi notion that Sibelius is old hat, or in any event not seriously deserving of modern attentions. So does Stokowski, thankfully, and furthermore he knows what this music is all about. He conducts the *Second* with superb attention to line and color, nowhere indulging in any wonted mannerisms and availing himself of every last opportunity to limn the score with its inherently shimmering northern lights. This is musical fire-and-ice of the very first order, its relegation to the library by so many conductors notwithstanding, and it is a joy to find that so supremely gifted an

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interpreter as Stokowski still thinks enough of it to give it his very best, which is as good as there is. The orchestral playing is a benediction, and Victor's New Orthophonic sound is alive with concert hall realism. Those who prefer a Scandinavian approach to the *Second* need not trade in the locally authentic Ehrling version, and the Collins performance has all the aspects of the appreciative but proprietous veneration in which Sibelius is held in England, but myself I wouldn't exchange this new one for any other in the catalogues. —J.L.

STRAUSS, Johann, Jr.: *Wine, Women and Song—Waltz, Op. 333; Artist's Life—Waltz, Op. 316; Morning Papers—Waltz, Op. 279; Csardas (from "Ritter Pazmann")*; *Frisch ins Feld—March, Op. 398*; **STRAUSS (Josef):** *Aquarellen—Waltz, Op. 258; Jockey Polka, Op. 278*. Vienna State Opera Orchestra conducted by Anton Paulik. Vanguard LP VRS-457, \$5.95.

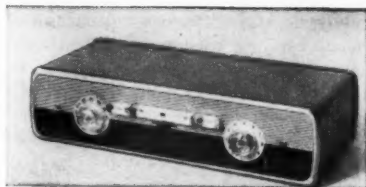
▲SOME of the most delightful performances of music by the Strauss family to appear in recent years have come from the baton of Anton Paulik, who has been leading conductor of the Vienna Volksoper for some fifteen years. In his latest recording, he leads the Vienna State Opera Orchestra in spirited readings of four familiar waltzes, set off by some lively shorter pieces. The spirit of Vienna pervades these performances, so one can barely keep feet still while playing the record. The orchestral sound is most attractive, with plenty of resonance and snap. —R.H.R.

STRAVINSKY: *L'Histoire du Soldat—Suite; Octet for Wind Instruments*; soloists conducted by Igor Stravinsky. *Symphonies for Wind Instruments*; North West German Radio Orchestra conducted by Stravinsky. Columbia LP disc ML-4964, \$5.95.

▲THE engaging *L'Histoire du Soldat* is a suite from Stravinsky's music for the stage piece of 1918. It has lately become familiar through a number of recordings and even a few concert performances. The

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same situation, to a lesser degree, obtains for the *Oclet* of 1922 (one remembers fondly Bernstein's Victor recording with first desk wind players of Koussevitzky's Boston Symphony). Almost never heard is the *Symphonies for Wind Instruments*, an austere, forward-looking work written in 1920 at the invitation of *La Revue Musicale* for a commemoration to the spirit of Debussy. The latter requires a wind band of over 20 players. "Symphonies," by the way, refers to the French word which literally translated means playing together. The work seems full of chants, is (as you would imagine) distinctly impersonal. It is a good deal closer to kind of writing Stravinsky has lately accomplished than the other two works represented. This is particularly true of its harmonies and its resolute and dignified chord progressions. The German wind players under Stravinsky make this music clearer and more agreeable to the spirit than any other performance I can recall. *L'Histoire* and the *Oclet* will, however, appeal to more listeners than the *Symphonies*. They are colorful, cheerful, ordered (without being aggressive about it). The playing by top New York instrumentalists is superb; Stravinsky's direction has never been more poised or assured. Also, this is hi-fi sound and no fooling. The recording is a feather in Columbia's hat; so, indeed, is the entire project.

—C.J.L.

■
TCHAIKOVSKY: *Romeo & Juliet—Overture-Fantasy*; **BORODIN:** *Polotsian Dances* from *Prince Igor*; **MUSSORGSKY:** *A Night on Bald Mountain*; *L'Orchestre Nationale de la Radio-diffusion Francaise and Chorus* conducted by Igor Markevitch. Angel LP 35144, \$4.98.

▲PERHAPS the purist Mussorgskyite would cavil at being served up the thrice-familiar *Polotsian Dances* in French, but I can imagine no other reasonable grounds for adjudging this disc below the highest current standards. The orchestral playing is whiz-bang, the interpretations of Markevitch exciting in the extreme, the recorded sound as fine as anything Angel has vouchsafed us—as fine as anybody has, 268

for that matter, except in the premium-priced range. The best French orchestras have a brass bite that puts most of our American ensembles to shame, and this attribute is impressively manifest in these performances. As is so often the case with such omnibus programs, the competitive versions of the several works are too numerous to compare in detail. But rest assured that you won't go wrong with this recording *in toto* if you can use everything on it.

—J.L.

■
VIVALDI: *Concerto for 5 Instruments in F; Sonata for Flute and Harpsichord in C; Concerto for Flute, Violin, and Bassoon in D; Sonata for 4 Instruments in E minor; Concerto for 5 Instruments in D*; Jean-Pierre Rampal (flute), Pierre Pierlot (oboe), Robert Gendre (violin), Paul Honge (bassoon), Robert Veyron-Lacroix (harpsichord). Haydn Soc. 116, \$5.95.

VIVALDI: *Bassoon Concerto in A minor; Flute Concerto in F; Concerto in G minor (Dresden); Oboe Concerto in D minor*; Nouvel Orchestre de Chambre de Paris, André Jouve (cond.). Westminster WL-5341, \$2.99.

▲VIVALDI's omnipresence since LP has proved that this composer was far more gifted than most of us believed 25 years ago. The Haydn Society disc is one of the most delightful Vivaldi programs extant. The works, written for small ensembles, are each in their own way gems, and the performances by five excellent French musicians are exceptional in every way for their stylistic polish, verve and poise. Though we think of the concerto today as a work for one or more display instruments against an orchestra, the original meaning of the word was the "performing together" of a group, hence these concertos are in keeping with the original intention. The manner in which Vivaldi employs his meager force in the concertos is an attribute to his genius, for each of the instruments assume an importance that cannot fail to fascinate the listener. Excellent recording.

The Westminster disc is marked chamber orchestra but the sonic attributes of

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the disc make one think of a larger ensemble. Three of these works have been previously recorded to advantages that cannot be overlooked in matters of style, for Mr. Jouve is an energetic and forthright conductor with little of the stylistic elegance that others have obtained. The sound here is crystal clear but overweighted at times. Its realism will unquestionably intrigue those who favor sonic values. But the Vivaldi enthusiast may be minded, if he does not already know them, to acquaint himself with the competitive versions. The *Bassoon Concerto* is performed by a less forceful Italian group on Colosseum 1015 which is well recorded. The *Concerto in G minor* is well performed by another French chamber ensemble on Period 514, and the *Oboe Concerto* is far better played by the Virtuoso di Roma on Decca 9679. Since each of these works are fine examples of the composer's work, especially interesting for his economic use of material, which is outlined by the annotator, the program merits attention though Mr. Jouve's healthy vigor does not allow his competent soloists the opportunities that others have done.

—P.H.R.

CHAMBER MUSIC

BACH: *Sonata and Partitas for unaccompanied violin*; Emil Telmányi (violin). London LP set LLA-20, \$11.94.

▲WHEN Columbia brought out Schroeder's unaccompanied Bach performances I deferred to sounder string men than myself in praising its illumination of the music as—so I was convinced—it had been conceived. Now comes the London issue, somewhat better recorded and more cleanly played, so that all other things being equal the superlatives applied earlier would be even more operative. The fact is, however, that I cannot this time sanction the “curved” bow without considerable qualification. Just as this album arrived for review I had been skimming the current issue of *International Musician*, in which, coincidentally, Sol Babitz devotes his column to what he calls the “Bach bow racket.” After reading and reflecting on April, 1955

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his remarks, and also digging into my *Musical Quarterly* files for a 1950 article by David Boyden, I have to agree that there exists no substantial proof or even much real support of the (Schering) sustained chord theory. Moreover, it seems to me that the only correct way to play these Bach chords is to arpeggiate them, which is just the way modern virtuosi do it. Boyden calls the Schroeder bow "a kind of mechanical monster," and points out that Schweitzer himself, whose enthusiasm for the Schering theory had inspired Schroeder in the first place, subsequently disproved the theory on the evidence of Schroeder's gadget. Now, the so-called Vega bow that Telmányi uses is a somewhat more extreme manifestation of the same theory. Therefore, I would say in sum that this is beautiful fiddling, perhaps accomplished as Bach meant it to be. But sounding as Bach meant it to sound? One cannot help but wonder. —J.L.

●
BRAHMS: *Quartet No. 3 in B Flat, Op. 67*; Quartetto Italiano. Angel 35184, \$4.98.

HAYDN: *Quartet in F, Op. 3, No. 5*; *Quartet in D minor, Op. 76, No. 2* ("Quinten"); Quartetto Italiano. Angel 35185, \$4.98.

▲THE latest releases of the Quartetto Italiano are notable for the exquisite recorded sound and the suave, polished playing of this ensemble. The Haydn scores are more successful than most of the existing versions. The group plays the lovely *Quartet in F* (with the famous *Serenade*) somewhat more romantically than the Griller or Amadeus Quartets, taking a rather slow tempo in the *Serenade*. However, their silky strings are a joy to listen to, so the result is most satisfying. The "Quinten" *Quartet* is also exquisitely played, but it faces stiff competition in the performances by the Vienna Konzerthaus Quartet (Westminster WL-5342), the Budapest Quartet (Columbia ML-4922) and the Schneider Quartet (Haydn Society HSQ-34). However, the new version is excellent, and stands up satisfactorily against any of the other versions and the recorded sound

270

is generally superior. The Brahms score, on the other hand, is less successful. Here the silky, luscious Italian tone is somehow out of place. The score has been called Brahms' "Pastoral" Quartet by some commentators, because of the general bucolic mood. The work was composed during 1875, a particularly happy period in Brahms' life. This feeling is reflected in the music. Existing versions by the Busch Quartet (Columbia ML-4330) and Curtis Quartet (Westminster WL-5152) seem to get closer to the heart of the score than this new version, in spite of the fact that it has the best recording. Each of the new releases has flawless surfaces. —R.H.R.

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HINDEMITH: *Sonata, Op. 11, No. 3*;

BARTOK: *Rhapsody No. 1*; **WEINER:** *Lakodalmas*; Janos Starker (cello) and Leon Pommers (piano). Period LP SPL-715, \$4.98.

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AROUND THE WORLD With Janos

Starker—Vol. II: *Cello Sonata* (Debussy), *Piece en Forme de Habanera* (Ravel-Bazelaire), *Après un rêve* (arr. Casals) and *Papillon* (Fauré), *Serenade for Chanson Gaillardes* (Poulenc-Gendron), *Sonata in G* (Breval-Moffat), *Sonata in E* (Francoeur-Trowell) and *Pastorale* (Couperin-Cassado); Janos Starker (cello) and Leon Pommers (piano). Period LP SPL-708, \$4.98.

▲ANOTHER feast for Starker fans. The Hindemith and Bartók pieces are standard repertoire and ever welcome. Weiner's, transcribed from his *Serenade for Orchestra, Op. 3*, simulates a Hungarian wedding in rather lugubrious fashion. The French collection fits the Starker personality like a glove, especially the modern works that allow him to soar and glide. His classic propensities are not pronounced, but the early items come off handsomely just the same. This is a great cellist, without the intellect of a Casals or a Janigro but bursting with temperament and never hesitant about its appropriateness, which is fine by me as long as he sticks to his kind of music. Fine sound, and highly expert accompaniments. —J.L.

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KEYBOARD

BACH: *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue; Italian Concerto; Capriccio on the Departure of a Beloved Brother; Sonatina from Gottes Zeit; Toccata in C minor; French Suites Nos. 3 in B minor, 4 in E flat, 5 in G, 6 in E; 15 Two Part Inventions; Fantasia and Fugue in A minor; Chorale Prelude O Mensch bewein; Fantasia in C minor; Fantasia and Double Fugue in A minor; James Friskin (piano). Bach Guild LP set (3 discs) BG543/4/5, \$14.94.*

▲**JAMES FRISKIN** has for a number of years been regarded by many as one of best Bach stylists among pianists. His reputation is well deserved. He plays cleanly, sweetly, with no violence. Emotionally, his work is low-voltage, however; and because of this, some will shy away from this excellently recorded set. Though this is no place to argue the disadvantages of performing this literature on the piano, may I simply say that I prefer Landowska on the *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue* and the *Italian Concerto* (Victor LP) and Valenti on the *French Suites* (Westminster). —C.J.L.

●
BACH: *Prelude and Fugue in A, B. W. 536; Prelude and Fugue in B minor, B. W. 544; Pastorale in F, B. W. 590; Fantasia in G, B. W. 572; Finn Videro playing the organ at Kaerteminde, Denmark. Haydn Society HSL-128, \$5.95.*

▲**VIDERO** here plays an organ built in 1938, but one with the qualities of a Baroque instrument. Full specifications are given on the jacket. The artist, in his notes to the recording, speaks of the "buoyancy and rich lyrical qualities" of the *Prelude and Fugue in A major* as unique in Bach, and even plays with the idea that it might be by some other master. But a very great master he must have been who wrote it! No less remarkable is the *Pastorale* with its serene opening movement. It hardly needs saying at this late date that Videro belongs among the finest contemporary organists.

April, 1955

He has been recorded with fine clarity.

—P.L.M.

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MOZART: *Sonata No. 4 in E flat, K.282; No. 5 in G, K.283; No. 10 in C, K.330; Variations on Salve tu, Domine, K.398; Haydn Society LP disc HSL-121, \$5.95. Allegro in G minor, K.312; Variations on La Belle Francoise, K.353; Sonata No. 13 in B flat, K.333; No. 15 in C, K.545; HSL-122, \$5.95. Fantasia in C minor, K.396; Variations on Come un'agnello, K.460; Sonata No. 12 in F, K.332; No. 17 in D, K.576; HSL-123, \$5.95. Fantasia in C minor, K.475; Sonata No. 14 in C minor, K.457; No. 6 in D, K.284; HSL-124, \$5.95. Adagio in B minor, K.540; Gigue in G, K.574; Minuet in D, K.355; Sonata No. 7 in C, K.309; No. 8 in A minor, K.310; HSL-125, \$5.95. Fantasia in D minor, K.397; Sonata No. 3 in B flat, K.281; No. 9 in D, K.311; No. 11 in A, K.331; HSL-126, \$5.95. Rondo in A, K.511; Sonata No. 1 in C, K.279; No. 2 in F, K.280; No. 16 in B flat, K.570; HSL-127, \$5.95. All played by Lili Kraus (piano).*

▲1956 is the 200th anniversary of Mozart's birth. With an eye on the calendar, many record companies are thinking in terms of complete presentations of entire sections of Mozart's output. A harbinger of these mental exercises are these seven new LPs devoted to all the major piano compositions of the Salzburg master. The artist chosen by Haydn Society for this worthy project is Lili Kraus, who will be

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remembered fondly by many for her pre-war recordings with Szymon Goldberg. Despite some harrowing personal experiences during the war, Miss Kraus seems to have emerged with most of her physical and mental resources intact. She is among the few living pianists who have mastered the skill of balancing the left and right hand parts of Mozart's piano writing—no mean feat since these compositions for the most part were conceived with an 18th-century instrument in mind (Stein was a prominent builder of this type piano—small dynamic range, limited keyboard, mellow bass, clavichord-like treble). Moreover, she does what every performing artist must do: communicate some kind of expression.

Now whether Miss Kraus' deeply personal playing is what Mozart had in mind, I think you will have to decide for yourself. For this listener, it lacks directness, seems fussy and mannered. But there is no gainsaying that there are moments here and there that possess real conviction. However, Miss Kraus has a bad habit of letting a line go limp after she has drawn it taut or giving a passage its head just after she handled it with relaxed ease. This sort of thing often will happen within a phrase. Even acknowledging the excessive refinement of Gieseking's playing in his Angel presentation of the Mozart piano works, your reviewer would rather live with that set than with Miss Kraus'. If you decide you want to dip into this new series, one would suggest HSL-121 for the great *K.330* and HSL-124 for the equally impressive *Fantasia and Sonata in C minor, K.475 and K.457*. The recording in all seven discs is unusually lifelike in the pianissimo, piano, and mezza-forte passages; just a bit shy of clarity in the fortes. The room resonance seems to me ideal for the music. —C.J.L.

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RACHMANINOV: *5 Piano Pieces, Op. 3; Polka de W. R.; 7 Piano Pieces, Op. 10; Nadia Reisenberg (piano).* Westminster LP WL-5344, \$5.95.

▲THE authoritative performances of Rachmaninov, of course, are those by Rachmaninov himself. But few LPs

in the catalogue sound as far-away and fuzzy as the dubbing on which the old master gives us his own interpretations. In lieu of some engineering miracle, Miss Reisenberg's cleanly articulated readings will do very nicely indeed. If she is not quite up to the massive style in which the composer wrote, that's all right; nobody around is any more. Certainly she plays these difficult little works as well as anyone could expect. The sound is good. —J.L.

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RAVEL: *La Valse; Valses nobles et sentimentales; DELIBES-DOHNANYI: Nails Waltz; J. STRAUSS, Jr.—DOHNANYI: Sweetheart Waltzes; Leonard Pennario (piano).* Capitol LP disc P-8294, \$4.98.

▲BRILLIANT this playing may be; insensitive it most certainly is. No hint of warmth or ease is present. This is hit-them-between-the-eyes pianism with a vengeance. It is occasionally impressive, but in the long run quite fatiguing. Pennario has apparently yet to learn how to relax and still maintain control. —C.J.L.

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SATIE: *Trois Gymnopédies; Trois Gnossiennes; Veritables Préludes Flasques pour un Chien; Chapitre Tournés en Tous Sens; Embryons Desseches; Sports et Divertissements; Fifth Nocturne; La Diva de l'Empire (arr. by Hans Oudine); William Masselos (piano).* MGM LP disc E-3154, \$3.98.

▲IF, like your reviewer, you agree with Cocteau that "there are certain works of art whose importance lies in their depth; the size of their orifice is of small account," then you may be enchanted with this new compendium of Satie's piano music. Certainly William Masselos plays all the pieces cleanly, clearly, coolly, like an angel. And surely MGM has given us in the past no better piano sound than this (even if this company continues to neglect its record surfaces). The works represented show us Satie at most of the significant stages of his creative life. The *Gymnopédies* and *Gnossiennes* date from 1888 and 1890; the *Préludes*, the *Chapters*,

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the *Sports* from 1913 and 1914; the *Noc-turne* from 1919. Aside from the well known and beloved *Gymnopédies*, I believe you will find most appealing the impressionistic *Gnossiennes* and the brisk, telegram-like *Sports et Divertissements*. You will most assuredly enjoy Edward Cole's informed and pithy notes on the record sleeve. Such loving attention to all details makes this issue of a neglected master's work one of important events of the year.

—C.J.L.

SCHUBERT: *Sonata in D, Op. 53; Sonata in E flat, Op. 122*; Friedrich Wuehrer (piano). Vox LP disc PL-8820, \$5.95.

▲THIS disc is in continuation of Vox's aim to have Wuehrer record all of the Schubert piano sonatas. It is no better or no worse than its predecessors. Wuehrer shows again good scholarship, a sound finger technique, and a little more than minimum communication of all the expressive force that is latent in these magnificent works. The *D major Sonata* is, of course, a dream; the *E flat* one of the lesser sonatas. If Aitken's performance for EMS were not so tense and rhythmically wayward (in spite of his superior illumination of the music here and there), it would be the one to acquire. As it is, take the new Vox disc which is decently recorded.

—C.J.L.

VOICE

BRAHMS: *Ein deutsches Requiem*; Lore Wissmann (soprano), Theo Adam (baritone), Frankfurt Opera Chorus and Frankfurt Opera and Museum Orchestra, conducted by Georg Solti. Capitol PBR-8300, 2 discs, \$7.95.

▲ONLY the other day I was defending the Brahms *Requiem*, which I have always dearly loved, against the attacks of a non-admirer. Listening to this recording I was almost ready to concede that my friend was right, as I certainly missed the thrill I have had from the work before. Solti's chorus leaves something to be desired—the women's voices are

inclined to spread, and due, apparently, to the microphone setup, the orchestra emerges more clearly than the choir. A strong effect is made with the s's in *Denn alle Fleisch*, but the inexorable melody lacks impact. The baritone soloist shows a sturdy and clean voice that mounts easily to the upper regions, but he misses the effects he might make when speaking of the Last Judgement. *Wie lieblich sind deine Wohnungen* is on the fast side and a bit casual; the beginning of *Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit* immediately following seems inconsistently loud. The soprano sings prettily for the most part, but loses focus when she applies pressure to her voice. Only in the final section, where the tenors proclaim *Selig sind die Toten*, did I experience any of the expected gooseflesh. Of course a return to the Karajan recording quickly told me why, for in it are molded phrases, timings just right, dramatic contrasts where needed, eternal awareness of the meaning behind the music, and a performance of the soprano solo by Elisabeth Schwarzkopf, so beautiful that it hurts. Not unnaturally the recording shows its age, but it is still effective. No, I was not wrong about the Brahms *Requiem*.

—P.L.M.

GALLUS: *Peter noster; De Sancte Michaelae Archangelo; Ecce Quomodo; Diffusa est Gratia; Hodie Christus Natus est; Mirabile Mysterium; Ascendo ad Patrem; Adoramus Te; Laetantur Coeli; Jerusalem Gaude; ISAAC: Jubilate; Innsbruck, ich muss dich lassen; Ich stand an einem Morgen; Zwischen Berg und tiefen Tal; Mein Freud allein; Mein Lieb war jung; Es wollt ein Maedlein grasen gehn; Ami souffrée; Greiner, Zanker, Schnoepfiter; Vienna Akademie Kammerchor, conducted by Ferdinand Grossmann. Westminster WL-5347, \$5.95.*

▲JACOBUS GALLUS, or Jacob Handl, is chiefly remembered by two or three pieces that have a way of turning up on choral programs. *Ecce quomodo*, *Adoramus Te* and *Mirabile mysterium* are here again, along with seven others equally fine,

Gallus is remarkable in that his music often suggests a later period than the 16th century in which he lived. Most striking is the chromatic *Mirabile mysterium* (previously recorded by the Dessoff Choirs under Boepple—Concert Hall CHC 44—and by Hindemith's Collegium Musicum—Overtone LP 5). It is perhaps this "modernism" that tempts so excellent a conductor as Grossmann into overloading the climaxes and relying on spectacular contrasts. One is inclined to admit that such works have a certain effectiveness done this way, but not that it is properly in character. Isaac, whose birth date, so far as it can be established, falls just one hundred years ahead of Gallus', takes less kindly to such treatment. These pieces are mostly German songs, and call for greater simplicity. —P.L.M.

INTERNATIONAL FOLK MUSIC

COUNCIL: *World Festival of Folk Song and Folk Dance (Biarritz-Pamplona July 1953)*; with an introduction by Ralph Vaughan Williams and commentary by Douglas Kennedy. Westminster WL-5334, \$5.95.

▲THOSE who have enjoyed the recording of the *International Eisteddfod* (Westminster WAL 209) are bound to have a good time with these straight and unpolished performances. Douglas Kennedy's running commentary is valuable, and simple enough to match his subject, but most moving is the introduction by Vaughan Williams, not only one of the great men of contemporary music, but an authority on folk song. Singers and dancers from many lands pass in review in characteristic though sometimes strikingly novel music. Such assorted features as the Basque "cry," the Norwegian Hardanger fiddle, the Japanese Koto (a thirteen-stringed horizontal harp), a group of alphorns, some yodelling in harmony, a gamelan orchestra and a couple of songs by our own Jean Ritchie, lend variety to the program. A *Bourée d'Auvergne*, played on a bagpipe with accordion accompanying, will be recognized by admirers of Canteloube

and Madeleine Grey. Some of the dances are very exhilarating. —P.L.M.

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KLEINSINGER: *Archy and Mehitabel—A Back-Alley Opera*; David Wayne (Narrator), Eddie Bracken (Archy), Carol Channing (Mehitabel), Percival Dove (Bill), and an orchestra conducted by the composer. Columbia LP ML-4963, \$5.95.

▲TO newspaper folk, the works of Don Marquis are a literature apart. Nothing quite like his column in the old *New York Sun* ever has graced the journalistic scene, and the collected adventures of his desk-mate Archy (a cockroach) and Archy's singular friend Mehitabel (a feline of racy proclivities) are required research for every aspiring cub. Those of you who have not known this regimen are warmly commended to *The Lives and Times of Archy and Mehitabel* (Doubleday, 1950). Certainly the uninitiated do not need to invest in any such collateral reading, because Kleinsinger's "back-alley opera" assumes no specialized background on the listener's part. In fact I incline to believe that you would be better advised to approach the Marquis legacy by way of Kleinsinger rather than vice versa, if only because the stuff of this opera, while diverting, is far superior in its original context. As an old city room hand myself I am impelled to insist that Kleinsinger does Marquis no justice at all, except of course to introduce Archy and Mehitabel to people who might not have heard about them otherwise. As lyric drama the work is decidedly minor, though deft. The participants are obviously Marquis fans, but then everybody soon becomes one upon exposure. The jacket notes, by E. B. White of *The New Yorker*, are worth the price of the album. Good sound. —J.L.

●
MENDELSSOHN: *Elijah*; Jacqueline Delman (soprano), Michael Cunningham (boy soprano); Norma Proctor (contralto); George Maran (tenor), Bruce Boyce (baritone), London Philharmonic Choir, Hamstead Parrish

The American Record Guide

Church Boys' Choir and London Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Josef Krips. London LLA-27, 3 discs, \$11.94.

▲AS A VETERAN of countless church performances of *Elijah*, I confess I did not approach this assignment with unbridled enthusiasm. But I reckoned without Mr. Krips, who, as I have heard him say, before every concert exhorts his men to play all the music as though it were by Mozart. Innumerable details of orchestration emerge in this performance, the drama has a force and conviction I have never heard in it before, the dynamic range is sometimes breathtaking, and above all everybody—and every instrument—sings. All this became the more apparent when I returned to the Sargent performance, which has had the field to itself these many years. Mechanical considerations aside, Sir Malcolm's is what we may call an excellent "habitual" performance—it might be better if he did not know the music so well. As for the soloists, he does have the edge, especially in the name part, for Harold Williams has long been justly celebrated for his interpretation of *Elijah*. The best of Krips' quartet is Norma Proctor, who bids fair to carry on the great tradition of the English contralto. Maran sings very tastefully, but he is less generously gifted. Miss Delman seems a little nondescript, and Bruce Boyce, always a musicianly singer, seems past the best days of his never remarkable voice. The brief part of the youth is sung by a sweet-voiced boy. —P.L.M.

POPULAR SPANISH SONGS: *La Granadina* (arr. Koerchert); *Serrana* (arr. Koerchert); *Asturia*; *Pano murciano*; *El amor es como un niño*; *Las majas madrilenas*; *El vito*; *Canto andaluz* (arr. Nin); Irma Kolassi (mezzo-soprano) and André Collard (piano). London 10" LD-9142, \$2.98.

▲KOLASSI'S voice is neat and agreeable in these Spanish songs, and she is always the musically satisfying artist. The songs, however, could do with more of the kind of temperament associated April, 1955

with their country and its singers than this Greek-French artist brings to them. The total effect is a bit placid. The high spot of the program is *Serrana*, in which the voice comes out rather surprisingly. —P.L.M.

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SCHUBERT: *An die Leyer*, Op. 56, no. 2; *Der Schmetterling*, Op. 57, no. 1; *Du bist die Ruh*, Op. 59, no. 3; *Geheimes*, Op. 14, no. 2; *Der Atlas*; *Das Rosenband*; *Der Musensohn*, Op. 92, no. 2; *Staendchen*; *Horch, horch, die Lerch*; *Gruppe aus dem Tartarus*, Op. 24, no. 1; *Litanei*; *Seligkeit*; *Nachtviolen*; *Abschied*; Gérard Souzay (baritone) and Dalton Baldwin (piano). London LL-1148, \$3.98.

▲MR. SOUZAY is among the busiest of recording artists, and one can only be amazed at the breadth and depth of his repertoire. I have had my doubts before, however, that Schubert is really for him, and these doubts are confirmed by this excellently balanced program. The voice itself takes to recording with extraordinary success, and his taste is consistently good. But the tone quality may perhaps be described as "gray," and it does not vary much, except in dynamics, from the bold opening recitative of *An die Leyer* to the infinite peace of *Du bist die Ruh*, from the tragic outcry of *Der Atlas* to the youthful ardor of *Staendchen*. In a bright little song like *Der Schmetterling* it seems quite out of place, and it is hardly adequate to express the archness of *Seligkeit*. It may seem strange to be calling for a spark of humor as an essential to lieder singing, yet this appears to be the main thing needed. Souzay's German is mostly very good and it is certainly clear. (though he pronounces the Greek name Atreus in some other language). He seems to tarry too near the surface of the songs he sings. —P.L.M.

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SCHUBERT: *Die Winterreise*; *Die schoene Muellerin*; Inez Matthews (mezzo-soprano) and Lowell Farr (piano). Period SPL 713-14, 2 discs, \$7.96.

▲ALTHOUGH the sentiments in Schubert's two Wilhelm Mueller cycles are decidedly masculine, Miss Matthews is

by no means the first woman to sing them, or to record them. Whether or not she is justified in so doing is largely a matter of opinion, for some of us are more particular about such niceties than others. Myself, frankly, I do not subscribe to absolute equality of the sexes in choosing repertoire, but I have frequently been forced to admit that a great interpreter can do pretty much as he or she pleases in the matter—I can be convinced. Miss Matthews, I am afraid, does not convince me, though much of her singing is tonally lovely, and she maintains in many of the songs a vocal line quite beautiful in itself. *Wohin?* is a case in point, or *Danksagung an den Bach*, or *Rueckblick*, or *Einsamkeit*. But she is not a subtle lieder singer. Her approach is definitely extrovert, in itself by no means a bad thing, but while she is singing out in a bright, healthy tone, she has little time for details of shading or word coloring. Toward the end of *Die Winterreise* she uses a *vibrato* which I do not find helpful in the kind of expression called for. I don't suppose anyone but a reviewer would be hardy enough to sit through the two cycles in one evening: even the 20 of the one or the 24 of the other are apt to become wearing unless they are sung with deep penetration. Still, if we forget they are cycles and take the songs individually, there is much to admire in Miss Matthews' singing. Incidentally, her German needs some cleaning up, and the recording balance is not quite ideal. —P.L.M.

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SCHUMANN: *Liederkreis*, Op. 39; *Frauenliebe und Leben*, Op. 42; Sena Jurinac (soprano) and Franz Holetschek (piano). Westminster WL-5345, \$5.95.

▲MISS JURINAC has one of the loveliest soprano voices extant today, and she is an artist of solid and musicianly attainments. But she is an opera singer. Vocally, her performance of these two cycles leaves little enough to be desired, her diction is clear and occasionally she gives extra stress to the words, as in the phrase *die schoene Waldeinsamkeit* in the first song of the *Liederkreis*, or builds

an effective climax, as in the second. On the other hand, in *Waldegessbraech* she fails to bring the drama to life, and she misses the ecstasy in *Fruhlingsnacht*. Even *Mondnacht*, for which she certainly has the equipment, is on the careful side, not so dreamy as it might be. In *Frauenliebe* there is no feeling of growth from girlhood to maturity, which after all is the whole point. In a word, peaceful, contented singing is not enough for these songs. —P.L.M.

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VERDI: *Don Carlos*—*Ella giammai m'amol*; *Nabucco*—*Tu sul labbro dei veggenti*; *Ernani*—*Infelice, e tuo credevi*; Cesare Siepi (basso) with Orchestra of the Accademia di Santa Cecilia, Rome, conducted by Alberto Erede. London 10-inch, LD-9168, \$2.98.

▲THESE three arias were all included in a more extensive Siepi recital, made, if memory serves, from masters antedating his American debut (Cetra 50035). Comparisons are fascinatingly revealing. Undeniably some of the bloom has gone from the voice itself, though it remains a superior instrument. Artistically, the years' experience has been good for the singer. His soft approach to the first pronouncement of the words *Amor per me non ha* in the *Don Carlos* scene is a case in point. In the *Nabucco* his intonation is at the least questionable, which is not so in the older recording. On the other hand, the cello tone in the older orchestra does not even approach that in the new. In the *Ernani* war-horse no Italian basso could very well go wrong, though once more we may turn to the Cetra version for a younger, fresher voice. —P.L.M.

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STRANGE TO YOUR EARS: The Fabulous World of Sound with Jim Fasset. Columbia LP ML-4938, \$4.98. ▲MILLIONS of radio listeners already have heard Jim Fasset demonstrate his cutting room capers. Those who have not are earnestly commended to hear this unsettling LP extension of Fasset's New York Philharmonic intermission talks. What you can do with a tape recording of any everyday sound is simply

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beyond the imagination. By speeding up or slowing down the reel, by raising or lowering the pitch level, *et cetera*, you can actually make a dulcet-voiced little canary bird make noises like Donald Duck or a B-29, as you please. What this remarkable disc proves I do not pretend to say, but it is entertaining and edifying and I think every hi-fi home is incomplete without it. —J.L.

POPS SPOTLIGHT

●HONORS are plentiful this month. Capitol takes first prize with its limited edition (WDX-569) of four discs entitled *The Kenton Era*. A huge, handsome and highly informative brochure, with a text by Bud Freeman, accompanies the set, which consists of previously unreleased recordings by the most famous, and perhaps the most significant, of the modern jazz giants. Several of the numbers are familiar to Kentonites in earlier issues (*Artistry in Rhythm*, *Machito*, etc.) but the bulk of the material will be brand new to most of his microgroove admirers. Now that this band's "standards" have attained to classic proportions in many an instance, there is no point in belaboring the historical importance of his entire discography, so that tomorrow's students (and indeed, today's) may observe the evolution of the Kenton style in all of its successive stages. Quite aside from its manifest acumen, Capitol merits a special vote of thanks for having taken the pains to prepare this omnibus release.

COLUMBIA gets a few posies, too. No pun intended in connection with *House of Flowers*, the earthy Capote-Arlen musical that serves principally as a vehicle for Pearl Bailey and the very talented Diahann Carroll (ML-4969). I saw the show and liked it, probably because I used to kick around the Caribbean and liked it, but I have to say that I like the LP version better. Capote had to stretch his material awfully thin to make it last a whole evening; 50 minutes worth of it is just right. Contrariwise, it's hardly sufficient for *Brubeck Time* (CL-622), because Dave and his men have so much to say musically that the minutes seem to run out with incredible speed. His *Audrey* (meaning Hepburn) is a dream, as she is, and each of the seven other items has something special to offer, if only streamlined shades of Fats Waller. But that's all right, because the Brubeck gang—in particular his superb alto, Paul Desmond—are artists to their fingertips.

STRICTLY PIANISTS: I was about to say of Brubeck that I do not find him interesting as a solo performer, but then any such opinion is invalidated because Brubeck cannot be considered, really, except as the stellar member of his magnificent team. The most exciting pianist *per se* among the younger lights, in my estimation, is

the Jamaica-born Donald Shirley, whose *Tonal Expressions* (CLP-1001) has just been released on the Cadence label. I have always been suspicious of any application of classical disciplines to jazz expression because the one precludes the other by definition. If it be reasonable to suggest that the exception proves the rule, then the rule certainly is a good one, because Don Shirley is the most exceptional exception I have ever encountered. He is altogether a magnificent stylist, so artful in his blend of the indigenous and the calculated that he would hold any listeners speechless, no matter their personal tastes in the matter. The same superlatives are in order, for other reasons cited in earlier columns, for the following new piano albums: Bud Powell (Norgran MG-N-1017); Oscar Peterson (with Buddy DeFranco in a Gershwin program, MG-N-1016); Barbara Carroll (RCA Victor LJM-1023); Marian McPartland (Capitol T-574); Beryl Booker (Cadence CLP-1000); and Art Tatum (with Benny Carter and Louis Bellson, Clef MG-C-643). All of the foregoing except the Booker are 12-inchers, and every one of them is a joy in its own distinctive way.

BROADWAY department this month includes, in addition to the aforementioned *House of Flowers*, one original cast recording each of *Plain and Fancy* (Capitol S-603) and the Cole Porter *Silk Stockings* (Victor LOC-1016). Musical fanciers will want to have both of these albums just on general principles. Both are authentic jobs and both are splendidly recorded. I didn't get much out of either myself, but then I didn't see either show and that can make all the difference. The plot of *Plain and Fancy* has to do with the miscibility, or lack of same, between New Yorkers and the Pennsylvania Amish. Porter's work is a dramatic hodge-podge in which an American actress, her agent, and a bunch of Russians somehow make their way through a maze of intrigue to a happy ending. Lots of melody in both shows, but no real hit tunes.

ANGEL has been dipping its classical toes into the foreign jazz field. On the initial evidence, the water is just right for a plunge. ANG-60000 through ANG-60003 comprise the first batch. Respectively these are discs by Svend Asmussen and his "Unmelancholy Danes," a round-up of Italian sidemen, Graeme Bell and his (Australian) jazz band, and *Le Jazz Hot* by the late Django Reinhardt and the Q.H.C.F. (which stands for the Quintet of the Hot Club of France). All of these recordings are beautifully engineered, and the last-listed is probably the finest posthumous testimonial yet to the gifted Reinhardt, whose mastery of the non-classical guitar was an unparalleled phenomenon. The group from Down Under are an electric bunch; so to a lesser extent are the Italians and the zany Danes. It is a pleasure to hear the lot of them, all the same, to see how our only native idiom takes to transplanting. If Angel decides to go deep into the catalogues of its parent company, E.M.I. of England, American *aficionados* are in for a veritable torrent of otherwise unobtainable material.

—J.A.S.

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